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EMPLOYMENT SERVICES IN TAMPERE

From the perspective of the visitors of Tampereen A-Kilta

ABSTRACT

Saara Virrankari: Employment services in Tampere from the perspective of the visitors of Tampereen A-Kilta
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Finland and the other Nordic countries are well-known for their unique welfare state model, which is characterized by high taxation and generous unemployment benefits. However, at the beginning of 2018, regardless of the warnings of experts and public protest, the government pushed through the so-called 'activation model', which may cause the unemployed to lose almost 5 % of their monthly benefits (Nortio, 2018). This kind of activation model can be seen as an example of an activation policy, which can be perceived to be treating the unemployed in an unfair and punishing manner, in addition to the recent cuts on welfare benefits as well as reductions in taxation, seem to be dismantling the very foundation that the social-democratic welfare state was built on (Jutilla, 2011).

The aim of this theses is to evaluate different services that are targeted towards the unemployed, based on the data that was collected by interviewing the unemployed who either worked at the community cabins of Tampereen A-Kilta as a part of their rehabilitative work and work try-out, or visited there regularly. Previous research has mainly focused on reviewing different kinds of policies that are targeted towards the unemployed from the viewpoint of the experts or the service providers, but very little is known of how the unemployed themselves view the services that are offered for them. The main research question will thus be "How do the unemployed who attend Tampereen A-Kilta perceive the services provided by the employment office, and how do these services affect their agency?"

This research project uses qualitative data, that was gathered through semi-structured interviews with the unemployed who have participated in the services provided by the labour force service centres. The interviews were carried out at A-Kilta's community cabins in Rautaharkko, Kissanmaa and Härmälä. During the interview they were asked about their educational and work background as well as experiences with different employment services, what they liked or did not like about them, and how the services could be improved in their opinion, in addition to why they had become unemployed in the first place.

The main findings were that the unemployed should have a say in their placement, since this enforces their agency as well as their satisfaction with the service, which further on influences their well-being. In addition to this, the need for continuity arose from the interviews, since this gives the participants hope and makes it possible for them to make future plans, which also affects their future outlook as well as well-being. Future policies that are aimed towards the activation of the unemployed should thus take into account the importance of voluntary participation, in addition to which some sort of continuity should be provided for the participants, and especially for the youth as well as the long-term unemployed. Some sort of compensation is also important f.e in work try-outs, since motivation for participation could be increased through extra benefits such as a free meal or a few additional euros on top of the regular unemployment benefits.

Keywords: Agency, A-Kilta, Employment services, Tampere, unemployment

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
1.2 Recent changes in the Finnish welfare state and the unemployment situation in Finland	2
1.3 Three models for social work in Finland	3
1.4 Agency and unemployment	5
2. Employment services in the Finnish welfare state & A- Kilta.....	7
2.1 Finnish welfare system	7
2.2 Employment services	9
2.3 Activation model	11
2.4 A-Kilta	14
3. Theoretical overview on agency and unemployment.....	17
3.1 Agency	17
3.2 Agency and unemployment	19
3.3 Agency and unemployment in Finland	22
4. Methodology.....	25
4.1 Data	25
4.2 Analysis	27
5. Findings.....	30
5.1 Voluntary participation	31
5.1.1 Rehabilitative work	31
5.1.2 Work try-out & pay subsidy	33
5.2 Continuity	34
5.3 Benefits	35
5.3.1 Rehabilitative work	35
5.3.2 Work try-out	37
5.3.3 Pay subsidy	38

5.4 Social rehabilitation	39
5.5 Online courses	39
5.6 Alcoholism	40
6.Discussion.....	43
8.Conclusions.....	45
9.References.....	47

1. Introduction

The motivation for studying the services that are provided for the unemployed in Finland arose from hearing several comments about the way how the current system did not work from various acquaintances over the years, as well as my own experiences with the services during my unemployment spells. I originally started studying the unemployment situation in Finland already during my premaster studies in sociology at Tilburg University in 2017, and the fact that I wanted to study the topic further was one of the main reasons for moving back to Tampere in order to do my master studies. Since most of the feedback that I had heard as well as the experiences I had gained were about the employment services in Tampere, it felt natural to focus my research on that area.

The following chapters provide information about the Finnish welfare state and the unemployment situation in Finland, which my studies originally focused on. After this, different models for social work in Finland are presented, since there is a large number of those who are long-term unemployed in the country, who according to Juhila (2010) are often considered to have become so dependant of different kinds of assistance systems, that they are no longer able to lead independent and self-directed lives. Because of this, social work is often focused on activating the unemployed through different kinds of employment programs and activation measures (Juhila, 2010). In addition to this, majority of the participants who were interviewed later on for the study at Tampereen A-Kilta were also long-term unemployed. Finally, agency was selected as a theoretical framework for the project, since loss of agency is often connected to unemployment.

1.2 Recent changes in the Finnish welfare state and unemployment situation in Finland

Finland and the other Nordic countries are well-known for their unique welfare state model, which is characterized by high taxation and generous unemployment benefits. However, over the past two decades, the Finnish government has been making cutbacks so that the benefit system has become more selective instead of being accessible to all. In addition to this, at the beginning of 2018, regardless of the warnings of experts and public protest, the government pushed through the so-called 'activation model', which may cause the unemployed to lose almost 5 % of their monthly benefits (Nortio, 2018). This kind of activation model can be seen as an example of an activation policy, which can be perceived to be treating the unemployed in an unfair and punishing manner, in addition to the recent cuts on welfare benefits as well as reductions in taxation, seem to be dismantling the very foundation that the social-democratic welfare state was built on (Juttila, 2011).

The unemployment rate peaked in Finland after the financial crisis of 2008. During that period, the rate grew to 8.2 % with approximately 221 000 people being unemployed. However, this figure does not include those who would be willing to work, but for some reason are not actively seeking unemployment. When these so-called ‘covertly unemployed’ are included, the number of the unemployed rises to 315 000 (<http://www.stat.fi>). At the beginning of 2018, the unemployment rate was 8.8 %, which is over 2 % higher than total unemployment in OECD countries. This shows that unemployment is a big issue in Finland, even though according to statistics from August 2022, the number of the unemployed jobseekers has fallen to 239 100. This is 41 900 less than in the previous year, in addition to which the number had fallen by 33 100 compared to last month (www.temtyollisyyskatsaus.fi). This is partly due to the new labour service model or the so-called ‘activation model 2’, which was adopted in May 2022. According to this model, the unemployed have to apply for up to four workplaces each month in order to keep their unemployment benefits (www.kela.fi).

1.3 Three models for social work in Finland

Moreover, even though Finland has different systems for job seekers who are capable and willing to work, and the long-term unemployed who for some reason are unable to work, many people are still falling between the cracks and become isolated from society. Already in 2002, Kirsi Juhila pointed out that in a welfare state such as Finland, one of the main tasks of social work is to function as a safety net for the people who have fallen outside the scope of general service systems, and a society which is largely based on the assumption that people earn their living through paid work. The latter group is also more controlled by the officials, who expect the unemployed to be more accountable than those citizens who are actively participating in the labour market and treated with more of a ‘laissez-faire’ attitude (Juhila, 2002). In a society which is based on individualism, consumerism and choice, more and more people see themselves as failures due to becoming marginalized.

Juhila (2002) distinguishes three models through which social workers aim to assist those who have become marginalized from the society: integrative, inclusive, and one that mainly produces otherness. In the first, integrative model, the main goal is to pull people back from the margins towards the centre, which is what society regards as normal. A more utopistic goal of this model is to create a society, where all citizens are ‘insiders’ who utilize the same welfare services, whereas a more modern and less utopistic aim is to seek balance between the margins and the centre, as well as socialize and rehabilitate the so-called ‘others’ into what the society views as the norm. However, the main issue with this model is that social work discerns the margins based on the normal centre, and

the only way through which the clients can become insiders is to comply with the norms of the society (Juhila, 2002).

In the second, inclusive model, social workers acknowledge that their clients come from various cultural backgrounds, respect the client's own knowledge and expertise regarding their situation, in addition to taking into account the flexibility between what is seen as normal or abnormal. The main goal is to highlight the importance of the voices and actions of those people who have become marginalized, while entering into a dialogue with them without judgement, evaluation as well as directing them based on the social worker's own value system. The inclusive model emphasises the importance of a civil society, active citizenship and different communities, where the task of the experts in the so-called 'new social work' is to empower and support their clients (Juhila, 2002).

In the third model, social work produces and enforces otherness for example by framing the clients as underprivileged, poor or lower class. Here the clients are considered to be so dependant of the assistance systems provided by the welfare state, that they have lost their ability to lead independent and self-directed lives. In this model, social workers are tasked with activating their clients through for example different kinds of employment programs, instead of fostering dependence. However, while these activation programs can be seen as integrative and aimed towards guiding the clients away from the margins, they also produce otherness since the clients are categorized as 'proper' citizens who have the ability to make the right choices, and the lower cast where the clients do not have that many social rights due to their inability to fulfil the criteria of an active model citizen even with support from the system. Here, activation policies are linked to the hardening control over the so-called 'Others', although the aim should be integrating them into the society. This model can also be seen as exclusive, since the abnormal or dangerous 'Others' are kept away from the centre and proper citizens through different control systems, instead of focusing on improving their living situations (Juhila, 2002).

Considering that the aim of this thesis is to examine how the unemployed, and especially those who were interviewed for the project through A-Kilta in Tampere, perceive the employment services that are provided for them and how these services could be improved in their opinion, the inclusive model of social work would seem to be the most suitable approach. This model highlights the importance of the clients' own expertise regarding their situation, as well as empowers them by giving the clients a voice in the matters that concern them, which is also one of the objectives of this study.

1.4 Agency and unemployment

Agency can refer to lifelong learning, active citizenship as well as social participation or healthcare, and is expected from people especially in the field of education and the labour market. It is often considered as the opposite of helplessness, relating to the ability to control and manage one's life, and the loss of agency is often related to for example drug addicts, alcoholics, the disabled or those who are at risk of becoming marginalized (Eteläpelto, Heiskanen & Collin 2011). Unemployment is also often connected to the loss of agency, since it usually leads to the loss of financial resources in the form of salary, in addition to making it more difficult for people to make future plans. Studies have shown that this loss of agency as well as inability to plan for the future influences the future outlook of the unemployed by making it more negative, which furthermore decreases their well-being (Creed & Klisch, 2005). In addition to this, according to Creed and Klisch (2005) age and length of unemployment have a significant effect on psychological distress, so that the long-term unemployed experienced more distress. Due to the abovementioned issues, agency was selected as the theoretical framework for this project.

The aim of this theses is to evaluate different services that are targeted towards the unemployed based on the data that was collected by interviewing the people who either worked at the community cabins of Tampereen A-Kilta as a part of their rehabilitative work and work try-out, or visited there regularly. A-Kilta's are independent associations that provide assistance and peer support for people who have issues with alcohol abuse. The main goal is to find out how the participants perceive the services that were provided for them, how these services could be improved in their opinion, as well as how they influence the agency of the participants. Previous research has mainly focused on reviewing different kinds of policies that are targeted towards the unemployed from the viewpoint of the experts or the service providers, but very little is known of how the unemployed themselves view the services that are offered for them. The main research question will thus be "How do the unemployed who attend A-Kilta perceive the services provided by the employment office, and how do these services affect their agency?"

The following chapter provides more information about the Nordic welfare model, examples of recent developments in the activation policies that are targeted towards the unemployed, as well as a short overview of the Finnish employment system and the services that are offered to the unemployed. A more thorough review of the previous research that has been conducted on the activation model is also provided, in addition to some background information about A-Kilta where the participants were selected from.

Chapter 3 begins with a theoretical overview of agency which entails the actions and choices that people make as a part of their daily lives, but can also be understood as a person's ability to create their own identity and strive towards certain life goals, so-called 'life course agency' (Eteläpelto, Heiskanen & Collin 2011). After this, previous research that has been conducted on the agency of the unemployed in Finland and abroad is also presented.

Chapter 4 introduces the methods that were utilised while conducting the research, and the research results are presented in the following chapter. Chapter 6 entails a discussion on the implications that these results have on future research as well as policies that are related to employment services and the agency of the unemployed. Finally, some concluding remarks are presented.

2. Employment services in the Finnish welfare state

2.1 Finnish welfare system

The basis of the Nordic welfare state is a combination of high tax levels and public expenditure, which is supposed to equalize economic outcomes. Although rising unemployment usually increases income inequality since those who suffer the most are low skilled employees with low salaries, it hardly grew in the Nordic countries during the recession of the 1990s because of generous unemployment insurance benefits (Aaberge et al., 2000). In Finland, the unemployment benefit system consists of three subsidy schemes: basic unemployment benefits, labor market subsidies and earnings-related benefits, the last of which is only available for those who are members of an unemployment benefit fund. In order to be eligible for the basic benefit, a person has to be between the ages of 17 and 64, registered as an unemployed job-seeker, capable and available for work, in addition to having been employed at least 43 weeks full-time in the previous two years. Finland also has a social assistance system that functions as the society's ultimate safety net, as well as a housing allowance that covers part of the income lost due to unemployment (Ervasti, 2002).

In the early 90s, the prevailing right-wing government criticized the Finnish welfare state model for being the main cause of unemployment, since it allegedly created disincentives for working through generous social security benefits. Because of this, unemployment benefits and social assistance were cut back and the eligibility criteria were tightened in order to lower the unemployment rate. The Finnish social policy was further reformed through a number of measures, including the prolongation of the requirement for full-time employment before being eligible for the benefits, a reduced amount of benefits if a person refuses to participate in suggested activation initiatives, and by making it compulsory for those between the ages of 18 and 24 without a vocational degree to apply to vocational schools (Ervasti, 2002).

Despite the economic crisis of 2008, the decision-makers prioritized economic growth and aimed at improving Finland's competitiveness by increasing labor market flexibility and decentralizing income negotiations. This led to lower taxation, privatization of public services, as well as cuts in social welfare benefits and stricter conditions for receiving them. In addition to this, despite rising wages and costs of living, other benefits such as student benefits were not raised during the decades that followed the recession (Juttila, 2011). This, coupled with the lower taxes, has led to rising poverty and income inequality in Finland, since such developments make it harder to redistribute wealth from the high earners to those who are dependent on social security.

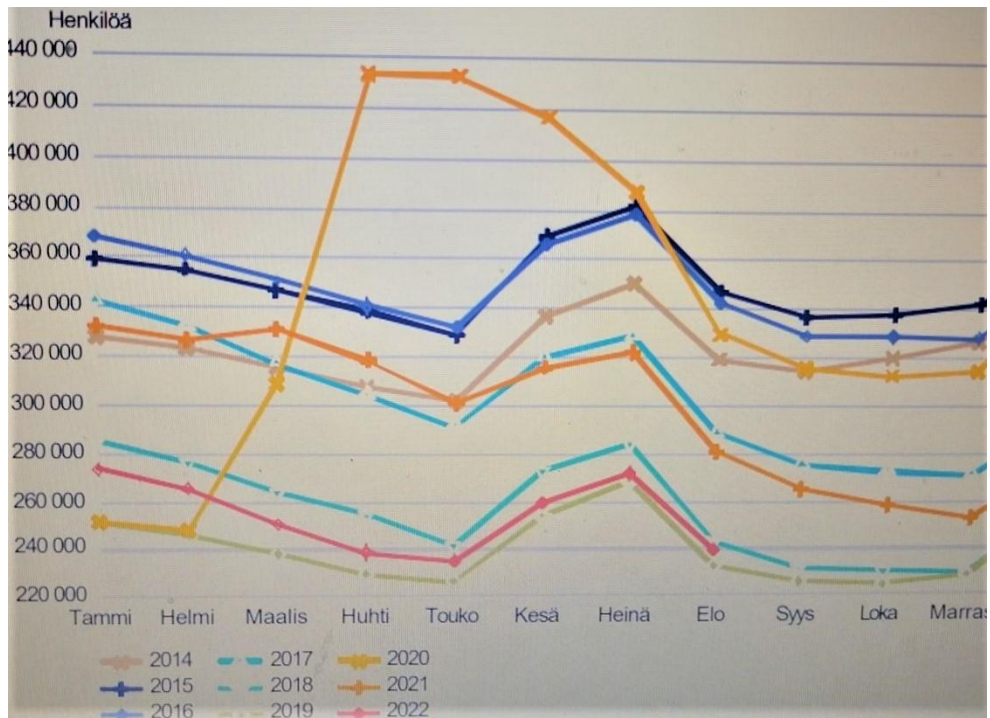


Figure 1

Unemployed jobseekers 2014-2022 (January-November) Työllisyyskatsaus.

Source: Valtioneuvosto (2022) Työttömät työnhakijat- kuukausivertailu

In February 2023, the number of unemployed jobseekers was 258,100. This includes those who were registered at the Employment Office, as well as participating in local government pilots regarding employment at the municipalities. The amount has decreased by 7,500 compared to the previous year, and the percentage of unemployed jobseekers in the labour force was 7.9. The number of long term unemployed was 85,100, which is 18,700 lower than in the previous year, and the number of people who had participated in different kinds of activation measures was 114,000, which had grown by 2,600 (www.tem.fi).

2.2 Employment services

The Finnish employment system is fragmented between various actors such as the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Education, the municipalities, the Social Insurance Institution (KELA) and the Unemployment Funds (Duell, Grubb & Singh, 2009). In addition to this, there are two separate systems that are targeted at job seekers and the long-term unemployed. There is a range of services provided for the unemployed, such as work try-outs, subsidized work, rehabilitative work as well as social rehabilitation. These services for example include programs such as pay subsidies, rehabilitative work as well as labour market training (Syvänen, 2023).

Work try-out is organized by the employment office and aimed for people who plan on changing careers, lack vocational education or otherwise want to find out whether a certain job is suitable for them. Participants may have also been unemployed for some time, due to events such as nursing, illness or taking care of a family member. The goal is to examine whether the participant's skills are suitable and up to date, as well as to assess what kind of assistance they might require in order to be able to return to the labour force. The maximum time that a person can participate in a work try-out at one place is 6 months, except while working for the municipality where they can attend a work try-out for 12 months, which is also the maximum amount that a person can participate in it (<https://toimistot.te-palvelut.fi>).

Pay subsidies are offered for the employers so that they could offer work to the unemployed. As long as the employer is prepared to provide the participant with a sufficient salary and has performed their other obligations, they are eligible for the subsidy except for government agencies. The subsidy is supposed to cover half of the payroll costs, but can be raised up to 70% if the participant's capacity for work has been reduced due to reasons such as old age. The participants may also suffer from an illness or be disabled in addition to lacking some professional skills, and the subsidy is intended for compensating the losses that the employer might face due to the employee's lower productivity as well as the extended training the participant may require. The subsidy system was reformed by the previous government in the beginning of 2023, with a goal of simplifying the process by reducing bureaucracy and increasing the subsidy for people whose capacity for work has been impaired due to issues such as disabilities, and groups who are otherwise difficult to employ like the long-term unemployed and immigrants (<https://tem.fi/>).

Rehabilitative work is offered by the county and aimed for people who cannot participate in the services provided by the employment office or have been unemployed for a long time. Participants include for example those who are returning to the workforce, going through rehabilitation due to an illness, or otherwise have difficulties with gaining employment due to issues such as substance abuse. The goal is to help the participants manage in their daily lives, provide them with structure and assist

them in getting back to the workforce. Rehabilitative work lasts at least three months, during which time the participants attend 1-4 sessions per week and gain 9e on top of their regular unemployment benefits, as well as a free meal and potentially a travel compensation (www.tyomarkkinatori.fi).

In social rehabilitation, the aim is to strengthen the client's social capacity through enhanced support, promote inclusion and battle social exclusion. In addition to individual support, social rehabilitation includes other activities that are targeted towards the client's needs, such as group activities (<https://stm.fi/>).

The employment office also provides various other services for the unemployed by for example producing information of new vacancies, assisting them with the composing of CVs and job applications, as well as matching the job seekers with jobs that are the most suitable to their skills. Furthermore, the employment office also organizes different kinds of training and workshops for the unemployed, where they can for example gain information on the recruitment practices used by different employers and recognize their vocational competencies. In addition to this, the unemployed can also seek vocational guidance and plan their careers with a psychologist, who assists them with finding a suitable education or organizing a work try-out (Duell, Grubb & Singh, 2009).

There is also a separate set of services provided by labour force service centres, that are aimed for the long-term unemployed who have been unemployed for 500 days, and are not suitable for training or work trials for example due to mental health issues or alcoholism. Here the clients have an initial appointment with an employment officer and a social worker in order to assess their health and vocational background, after which an individual activation plan will be drawn. This plan usually involves different social and employment services, youth workshops, as well as work practice, training and rehabilitation (Duell, Grubb & Singh, 2009). One of the latest projects aimed for the long-term unemployed in Pirkanmaa area is focused on improving their ability to work, and was instigated in the year 20 (Kuntaliitto, 2022). There is also a range of other projects in Pirkanmaa area that are directed for the long-term unemployed, such as the Yhteistyöllä työhön project which is offered by employment association Etappi and provides the long-term unemployed with different possibilities for work try-out out and subsidized work, that are related to for example woodworking and restoration, graphic design as well as cleaning. Some of the additional projects are the Eteenpäin project offered by Jakamisen Paikka ry, that presents the long-term unemployed the ability to increase their skills and competence as well as improve their possibilities for finding employment, as well as the Polkuja työhön 2 project provided by Heiskanen ry, where the goal is to help the long-term unemployed find work or vocational education, as well as provide them with the ability to complete different components of a vocational degree during a work try-out or subsidized work (TE-palvelut, 2022).

2.3 Activation model

In 2018, the government established a so-called ‘activation model’ regardless of the warnings of experts and public protest. According to it, those who are unemployed have to either work 18 hours, earn 241 euros through self-employment, or attend the services provided by the unemployment office for five days within a three-month period. Failure to comply with these terms results in 4.65 % cutbacks in monthly unemployment benefits (Ikävalko & Sullström, 2018). However, what the government failed to consider is that it is simply not possible to provide these services or find employment for all of the unemployed in smaller towns and villages, since their social workers were already struggling to find a place for the clients they had before the implementation of the new model. This means that the people living in these places are more likely to suffer from the implementation of the activation model than those who live in large towns and cities, since the latter have access to better services and a considerable number of available workplaces.

Since the activation model is a relatively new policy, it has not yet been studied extensively by established research agencies. However, VATT (government’s institute for economic research) evaluated the effects of the activation model on the unemployed by reviewing the unemployment records from the last three years, as well as through questionnaires and interviews with 20 people working in the unemployment office. Based on the records, during the first round of inspection the introduction of the activation model led to the cutting of benefits from over one third of the unemployed. In addition to this, participation in the employment services significantly increased after the establishment of the activation model among those who received unemployment benefits from KELA as well as those who collected earnings-related benefits, and especially among the older age groups for whom finding employment in the open labour market is more difficult (Kyyrä et al., 2019).

The results regarding working during unemployment and termination of unemployment remain indefinite, although both increased after the introduction of the model, especially among those who received earnings related benefits. For those who received unemployment benefits from KELA, working during unemployment also increased. However, increased employment is mainly related to the improvement of the overall employment situation in the country, and without a reference group it is hard to determine whether this actually was a result of the activation model. The long-term effects are dependent on whether participation in employment services actually promotes becoming employed, because even though activation model increased the participation in these services, it remains unclear whether they actually promote full-time employment (Kyyrä et al., 2019).

In the questionnaire and interviews conducted by VATT and the University of Turku, information was collected mainly on how the introduction of the activation model has influenced the organization of the employment services, and the work that is carried out with the clients. The number as well as selection of services had increased in addition to the willingness of the clients to participate in them.

However, according to the employment office, from the viewpoint of the labour market policy the activation model was not an appropriate instrument for promoting employment, because it did not sufficiently take into account the motivation, needs and qualifications of different clients. This ultimately led the model to increase inequality, become unjust and targeted towards the wrong client groups. The group that has the most difficulties with gaining employment from the open labour market are those who suffer from severe mental health issues or alcohol abuse and have issues with life management. The people working in the employment office deemed the activation model to promote the kind of activation that is not based on the client's needs or motivation and is not useful for labour market policy, since it has only seemingly increased the activity of the clients who seek to fulfil the terms and conditions of the activation model (Kyyrä et al., 2019).

According to those who were interviewed, labour market policy as well as the services of the employment office should be made more customer-oriented, positively encouraging (carrot instead of stick) and comprehensive (providing more assistance to the clients throughout the process). In addition to this, according to the experts, the law- and policymakers do not have a sufficient understanding of the customer work that occurs at the employment office, and they should visit the offices in order to gain a better picture of the work that is done there and the kind of perseverance, orderliness and ability to motivate it requires (Kyyrä et al., 2019).

In her graduation thesis Wahl (2018) focused on the effect that the activation model had on the role of the clients at the employment office, and what makes for an active client. Her theory was focused on studying the role of the client from the viewpoint of the public sector and how the demand for being an active client is related to the concept of being a client. Research was conducted by analysing different media outlets, mainly news articles and some opinion pieces. However, she only had access to limited resources since the model had been introduced only nine months before the research project (Wahl, 2018).

Wahl (2018) uncovered three discourses on how activation appears in discussions on the activation model and the unemployed: the lazy unemployed where media focuses on the negative aspects of unemployment, ill-prepared since even the employment officers did not have sufficient information of the model and the kind of activities that were accepted based on it, and income transfer where benefits that are cut due to not complying with the terms of the model are compensated through some other benefits such as social assistance. In theory activation is seen as a good thing since those who are active are motivated, responsible and participate in the society. They are model citizens who are capable of making use of the services provided by the society and the employment office, and independently complete the demanded tasks online. However, the activation model sets narrow limits to the kind of activity that is acceptable, and is less focused on encouraging the clients to be more active in general, since self-motivated activation is not necessarily accepted. In addition to this, the

unemployed are treated as a heterogenous mass instead of focusing on them as individuals who have different starting points (Wahl, 2018).

According to the interviewees, the activation model only slightly affected the role of the client at the employment office, since most services are nowadays provided online. Positive aspects of the activation model were increasing employment as well as the participation of the unemployed to the society, since ultimately the goal was to increase the participation of the less active clients so that no one slips through the cracks (Wahl, 2018).

In her thesis Auvinen (2019) investigated in what ways the job seekers had fulfilled the terms and conditions of the activation model in order to maintain their eligibility for unemployment benefits, and the factors that affected their ability to fulfil these conditions. She conducted a case study with statistical material from different databases, as well as semi-structured (theme) interviews with seven experts from the unemployment office in order to further develop the model (Auvinen, 2019).

The results revealed that the objectives of the activation model had been fulfilled to some extent, but that it increased inequality between the clients for example due to long distances and unavailability of public transport. Unemployment had steadily decreased in all municipalities from which the statistics were reviewed, however in 2018 it had decreased more among women than men even though the opposite was true before the introduction of the activation model. In addition to this, unemployment had decreased more among those who were above 50-years old compared to the previous year. The model had not been as successful for the activation of the adults (above the age of 30), who showed more interest in complying with the terms at the beginning of the year and during the period when eligibility for the benefits was inspected, but became less active towards the end of the year (Auvinen, 2019).

The elderly clients were more worried about fulfilling the terms and conditions of the activation model, whereas young people (below the age of 25) showed less interest in complying with them. However, the latter group is not necessarily eligible for all benefits due to living at home, in addition to which their parents' salaries affected the amount of benefits they received, except for those who had a vocational education. On the other hand, those who were between the ages of 25 and 29 and did not live with their parents were more willing to participate in the services and do odd jobs in order to fulfil the employment conditions (Auvinen, 2019).

The factors that diminished the activity of the clients were transportation costs, high demands for a job and availability of financial assistance from parents (especially among young adults), low or outdated education, health issues, language barrier (for immigrants), structural unemployment (especially for those in assisted living), as well as being isolated from the society. The model could be developed through an increase of more flexible short-term services and coaching, as well as inclusion of self-motivated activation methods such as voluntary work, online courses and job seeking to the list

of activities that fulfil the terms and conditions of the model. Usage of work trials was also criticized in cases where it did not lead to further employment, in addition to which doing odd jobs often delayed the payment of unemployment benefits. The experts also deemed that the activation model is not suitable for those who require additional support services, since they are often uneducated, lack the required skills for job seeking and have issues with alcohol abuse (Auvinen, 2019)

2.4 A-Kilta

The participants who were interviewed for this research project were either customers at Tampereen A-Kilta or employed there for example as a part of the work-try outs or in rehabilitative work, who had diverse experiences with the services that are provided for the unemployed by the employment office in Tamere. A-Kilta's are independent associations that provide peer support for people who have issues with substance abuse. In 2018 there were 63 A-Kilta's in Finland, in addition to which they have a common association called A-Kiltojen Liitto ry (Union of A-Kilta's) that for example organizes training for its members and publishes a magazine called Vesiposti. The Union also participates in substance abuse related policy-making and upholds the rights of those who are in recovery (Michelsson, 2018). All A-Kilta's operate under the same values which are pursuit towards substance-free living, voluntary participation, experientialism, communality, activation and cooperation.

A-Kilta has operated since 1968, and in 2020 it had three community cabins in Tampere that started to operate in 1998 in three different districts and were open to everyone; Hippostupa which was situated in Kissanmaa, Härmälätupa which is situated in Härmälä, and Kartanotupa which is situated in Rautaharkko. However, the community cabin in Kissanmaa was shut down in the Summer of 2021, when the neighbourhood was re-zoned, and the residents were relocated. Eventually a new community cabin was opened in Hervanta in the Autumn of 2021. The customers have the ability to receive personal guidance and support in various everyday challenges at the cabins, in addition to several other issues such as substance abuse, finding suitable housing or help with financial management, as well as loneliness. In addition to this, lunch is served three times a week at the cabins, and free food is distributed there once a week. There are also weekly activities organized at the cabins such as bingo and quizzes, in addition to which the visitors are provided with the possibility to wash laundry and go to sauna once or twice a week. Various groups such as guitar group, women's group and a circus cafe are also organized at Kartanotupa (www.tampereena-kilta.fi).

The core values of A-Kilta are substance free living, voluntary participation, experientialism, communality, activation and cooperation. All of the activities that are provided are substance free and if people show up under the influence of alcohol or are suspected of this, they are breathalysed and

told to leave the premises. Moreover, the activities are not treatments for substance abuse, and there are no treatment goals except for substance free and better living. No form of treatment is considered to be better than others and the participants own targets related to substance use are respected. The pursuit of substance free living is supported through available activities and guiding people to other services or activities. However, despite the pursuit of substance free living, people are still welcomed to A-Kilta even if they have slipped up, although after this it may be harder for them to return to the fold. Moreover, people who join do not have to promise to stay sober. Since A-Kilta is a nonpartisan association and is not religiously affiliated, it may be easier to commit to it compared to for example Alcoholics Anonymous. In addition to providing support for those who are struggling with substance abuse, A-Kilta also provides it to those who are close to them.

Even though there are also paid employees at A-Kilta, voluntary workers form the core of the association, and without them there would be no activities. People participate out of their own will and without the expectation of being compensated. Many people want to provide assistance for others after first receiving it themselves. However, it is important to acknowledge the volunteers and show gratitude towards them. Participants decide the amount and quality of their participation while carrying the responsibilities they have taken on. The activities are aimed towards common good in the spirit of from us to us. One of the best aspects of association activities is their flexibility, since this offers the possibility of organizing various kinds of activities.

At A-Kilta, experientialism refers to equality, and is based on the identification with the experiences of others while also respecting the differences between the participants. Recovery experiences are important, and everyone has a right to their own tale. Experientialism also refers to trust, understanding and encouragement.

Small daily communities are formed at A-Kilta where everyone is welcome, and these communities represent the communality aspect of the association. The main qualities of communality are harm prevention, participation, security, fellowship and equality. At A-Kilta people support each other while also taking others into consideration.

The activities at A-Kilta are formulated towards recovery so that through them people could have substance free days. They support and enforce independency so that people have the possibility to act themselves. However, people are not forced to participate and the activities are not meant to be carried out by force. Diverse activities are formed through collaboration and by recycling good operating models. The participants own interests are utilized and the activities are planned on the basis of them. The activities are meant to lower the threshold of participating in conversation, relax and provide content to otherwise empty days. Even though they are not necessarily unusual, they may be new and special to the participants. However, it is important to keep in mind also the other values behind the activities such as substance free living. New kinds of activities are also planned to tempt

new participants. Even though the activities are open to everyone, it is important to organize for example hikes which people with mobility restrictions cannot necessarily attend, but they can participate by making a fire and frying sausages.

The activities at A-Kilta are made public and transparent. Open cooperation with other service providers is supposed to benefit those who have issues with substance abuse or are in recovery. As previously mentioned, the activities are nonpartisan and not religiously affiliated.

3. Theoretical overview on agency and unemployment

3.1 Agency

In today's society, many kinds of agency are expected from people, whether it is in the form of lifelong learning, active citizenship and social participation or healthcare. Especially in the fields of education and in the labour market, people should be initiative, entrepreneurial and creative in addition to being willing to continuously learn new things and develop new practices. The authorities consider agency as the opposite of helplessness, relating to the ability to control and manage one's life, and the term has been widely used when discussing groups that have difficulties with life management such as alcoholics, drug addicts, the disabled or those who are at risk of becoming marginalized. Especially in the field of education, several forms of guidance and rehabilitation have been developed in order to enforce the agency of these groups (Eteläpelto, Heiskanen & Collin 2011).

However, while discussing agency it is important to determine what actually counts as agency, whether it refers to simple daily choices and activities or has to involve the development of new and creative ideas as well as practices, and whether it needs to be a conscious choice or a course of action or can also refer to situations where people have drifted into due to circumstances that are beyond their control. Agency is also often linked to power, since it is not possible if a person does not have the ability to influence things, make choices and decisions or bring about change. In the age of postmodernity and increasing uncertainty, the management and creation of one's identity also involves agency as the ability to control oneself (Eteläpelto, Heiskanen & Collin 2011).

In order to include a temporal aspect into agency, there has also been discussion of 'life course agency', which refers to a person's attempts to influence and form their own life in the long run, entailing activities that have long-lasting consequences, such as the selection of education, place of residence or a partner. On a personal level, life course agency refers to a person's ability to formulate and strive towards certain life goals. In empirical studies life course agency is often connected to self-efficacy, the competence to make plans and the ability to maintain several identities (Eteläpelto, Heiskanen & Collin, 2011).

Sociologist Anthony Giddens (2005) has studied social practices of different populations and highlights the way how actors or agents maintain and recreate the social codes and norms of their society. In his theory of 'structuration', while the societal structure guides and restricts the agents, they also play a crucial role in creating the structure. According to him, actors continuously recreate human practices through the ways that they use to express themselves, as well as the norms and rules of the society that they adhere to, which is what ultimately upholds or transforms the societal structure. Here the structure consists of rules as well as resources in addition to processes of action,

which are made real by the actors. Because of this, the structure is always in process instead of being fixed. In addition to this, according to Giddens (2005), “To be a human being is to be a purposive agent, who both has reasons for his or her activities and is able, if asked, to elaborate discursively upon those reasons” (p. 121).

In his stratification model of the acting self, rationalization, motivation for action and reflexive monitoring are processes that are embedded in human behaviour, where intention or rationalization of action is often the basis on which the competence of actors is evaluated on. In addition to monitoring their own activities, humans also expect others to do the same and monitor different aspects of the contexts where they move. While reason gives agents the grounds for action, motives are the desires that evoke it, although often they provide peoples with plans based on which they conduct themselves. Although actors cannot always provide motives for their actions due to unconscious motivation. However, routines are the predominant form of daily activities, which are aimed towards minimizing unconscious sources for anxiousness. Human agency has often been defined based on intentions, so that the person who performs it has to have some intention for doing it, or else it is seen only as a reactive response (Giddens, 2005). However, agency does not refer to the intentions that people have for their actions, but their ability to act in the first place, while intentionality refers to an act where the person who performs it knows that it will have a certain outcome and uses this knowledge in order to achieve said outcome. Since actions are often restricted by the individual’s ability to exercise power or make a difference, and when people loose this ability, they also loose their agency. Giddens (2005) also discusses the duality of power, where it is not only considered as the ability of an actor to make decisions that they prefer.

Jyrkämä (2007) has studied the functional capability as well as agency of the elderly. In the field of gerontology, the focus has moved from the social capabilities of the elderly to a more comprehensive, biopsychosocial approach that also takes into account the physical and psychological aspects. Baltes (in Jyrkämä (2007) has developed the so-called SOC-model, where the elderly strive to level their decreasing capabilities for example by trying to make choices that reflect their capabilities and doing things that the circumstances allow best. Regarding life course agency, Elder and Kirkpatrick Johnson have written that “individuals construct their own life course through choices and actions they take within the opportunities and constraints of history and social circumstances” (in Jyrkämä, 2007, p. 203). Here, individuals build their life-course and future based on the resources that they have, within the socio-cultural as well as locational and temporal constrains and possibilities provided by their current situation.

Jyrkämä (2007) also discusses the modalities of agency, which are knowing, being able to, having to, wanting to, being capable of and feeling. Here ‘knowing’ refers to the knowledge and skills that a person has, while ‘being able to’ refers to the physical and psychological capabilities. ‘Having to’ refers to physical and social constraints and compulsions, whereas ‘wanting’ refers to a person’s motivations and goals. Finally, ‘being capable of’ refers to the possibilities offered by the current situation, while ‘feeling’ refers to a person’s basic character of evaluating, experiencing and connecting feelings to certain things or events. Agency is thus something that is shaped and enabled by these modal dimensions.

3.2 Agency and unemployment

In their study, Creed and Klisch (2005) tested how the latent deprivation and agency restriction models predicted the well-being of the unemployed. The latent deprivation model was developed by Jahoda in 1981, according to whom the inability to benefit from latent benefits of employment such as a time structure and broader social contacts have a larger effect on the well-being of the unemployed than lack of financial resources. In turn, his student Fryer developed the agency restriction model, which places a greater importance on the poverty and inability to make future plans caused by unemployment, which restrict a person’s agency thus hindering their ability to plan and lead a satisfying life (Creed & Klisch, 2005). Although both models have been widely studied, only a few have tested the effects that their future outlook has on the well-being of the unemployed. Here, ‘future outlook’ refers to “the construction of prospective self-representations in terms of hopes and fears and is seen to provide a basis for anticipating future events, setting goals, planning, exploring options, making commitments, and subsequently guiding a developmental course” (Creed & Klisch, 2005, p. 252). Based on the works of Fryer, according to whom poverty may have an effect on the future outlook of the unemployed as well as a direct effect on their well-being, Creed and Klisch (2005) also tested whether financial hardship influenced well-being through an interaction with future outlook, and whether financial hardship influences well-being through future outlook as well as directly.

Creed and Klisch (2005) discovered that although the latent benefits of employment significantly correlated with the psychological distress experienced by the unemployed, the associations became non-significant when other variables of the study were controlled, and the latent benefits did not contribute significantly to predicting distress. They also ascertained that having a negative future outlook explained a significant amount of variance in psychological distress, and that there was also a direct association between financial strain and psychological distress. In addition to this, there was a significant association between future outlook and psychological distress. However, financial strain had no interaction with future outlook in predicting psychological distress, whereas it predicted future

outlook which acted as a mediator between financial strain and psychological distress. These findings signify that financial distress and future outlook have a direct influence on the well-being of the unemployed, while financial strain also has an indirect effect on well-being through future outlook, and thus support the agency restriction model. Creed and Klisch (2005) also discovered that age and length of unemployment had a significant effect on psychological distress, so that the elderly experienced more distress.

Sage (2017) combines Jahoda's latent deprivation theory with Fryer's restricted agency model and Ezzy's theory of status passage, where focus is on the social meanings that the unemployed give to unemployment as well as employment and the social statuses they attach to these positions. Here unemployment is seen as a sort of 'status passage', where the experience of unemployment is made displeasing and detrimental to well-being because of the negative meanings attached to it. In all of the abovementioned theories, unemployment is strongly linked to the experience of loss, whether it is time structure, salary, control over one's life or status. Sage's (2017) research therefore concentrates on how employment policies can either minimize or magnify this experience of loss. He interviewed people who had participated in the British active labour market programs, which are training programs that aim to provide the unemployed with an environment where they can gain work experience and more structure in their lives, as well as use their skills. Sage (2017) also focused on the way how the unemployed perceive the influence that loss of employment has on their lives and what kind of effect the active labour market programs have on this experience.

For all of the unemployed interviewed by Sage (2017), unemployment was a negative experience where people's emotions ranged from feeling down and useless to suicidal. They also felt that they had lost something meaningful, whether it was routine, autonomy, purpose or status. The loss of status was often made worse by the interviewee's work ethic and the feeling that working was the 'right' thing to do, as well as the way how the media portrayed those who lived on benefits. The people who had participated in work programs where the goal is to quickly get people back to the labour market had only negative experiences, and the participation had only amplified the feeling of loss. Since the goal was to provide participants with any kind of work, they were often directed into jobs or training that did not suit their skills or seem worthwhile. Advisers were often too busy to help their clients and treated them condescendingly, which only worsened the feeling of being stigmatized (Sage, 2017).

However, for those who had participated in personal support programs that also help people with issues such as substance abuse or mental health problems, the experience was significantly more positive. The advisers treated their clients respectfully and made them feel welcome, in addition to cooperating with them in order to find suitable jobs. The service was also more personalized, which counteracted the loss of agency, and the goal was primarily to improve the client's living situation so

that they would become more capable for work (Sage, 2017). The latter program's success in improving the client's well-being shows that in addition to providing them with the latent benefits of work such as time structure, other negative aspects of unemployment such as loss of status should also be addressed. The services provided by A-Kilta are quite similar, because even though they do not necessarily aim at providing people with employment, there is always a counsellor present who can help the visitors with various kinds of issues or merely lend a listening ear if they need someone to talk to. Since the focus is on substance-free living, there are also different kinds of activities for passing the time, such as pool, bingo or quizzes, or one can simply watch television or read a magazine there.

In their study, Kamerāde and Bennett (2018) examined whether doing voluntary work had an impact on the well-being of the unemployed, while focusing on whether the country where they were from had generous unemployment benefits, and if this had an effect on the outcome. They argue that in the countries with generous unemployment benefits, voluntary work could in part counteract the loss of latent benefits gained from employment, whereas in countries that are more centred around work and have less generous benefits this effect would be smaller. Kamerāde and Bennett (2018) based their research on the works of Jahoda and Fryer, as well as Beck, according to whom maintaining full employment is no longer possible, which is why societies should adapt a 'post-work' and 'multi-activity' perspective, which values as well as rewards also other forms of work such as housework and voluntary work. Here a person could gain the same manifest and latent benefits through some other form of activity, such as civil labour which is similar to voluntary work, and socially valued as well as recognized and publicly funded. This would also provide them with an alternative way to implement their agency. Other latent benefits that voluntary work provides is time structure and social connections.

Countries with generous unemployment benefits reflect Beck's ideology of a multi-activity society, since in such countries temporary unemployment is not necessarily as stigmatized, and because people do not have to worry so much about making a living, they have better opportunities for executing their agency through other means than labour, such as voluntary work. However, in countries where unemployment benefits are less generous, people are more dependent on work, and unemployment is not as accepted. Kamerāde and Bennett's (2018) study was the first one that cross-nationally inspected the influence of unemployment benefits on the impact that doing voluntary work has on a person's well-being.

Although their findings support the theory that doing voluntary work has a positive effect on a person's well-being in countries with generous unemployment benefits, Kamerāde and Bennett (2018) discovered that in countries where benefits are less generous, people who did voluntary work actually

had poorer mental health. On the other hand, in spite of the generosity of benefits, those unemployed who also did voluntary work felt that their life was more worthwhile. In addition to this, people who lived in countries with more generous unemployment benefits experienced better mental health and well-being, which supports previous studies that also found that generous benefits diminish the negative effects that unemployment has on well-being and mental health, since it reduces poverty and stress.

3.3 Agency and unemployment in Finland

In her study, Lähteenmaa (2011) focused on unemployed youth and their agency, as well as the methods through which they were trying to remain active despite very limited circumstances. In today's society, the unemployed are usually required to do something for their benefits, whether it is looking for employment, participating on a course or just regularly checking in with the employment office to update their situation. However, the options for activation are often very limited, and for example part-time studying or working in grey economy are frowned upon. Lähteenmaa (2011) also examined how the youth themselves perceived their own agency and what restricted it, and what they were doing to improve their situation. She based her research for example on the work of Hoggett and Frost (2008), who criticize Giddens' thesis that in this time of reflexive modernity, people have more opportunities for agency and to change the factors that influence or limit their lives only through their own reflective capabilities; instead they argue that people who live on benefits have very limited possibilities for agency. They also studied people's agency in the conditions of double suffering, which refers to the way in which social suffering such as poverty or unemployment creates even more suffering in the form of shame or health issues. In addition to this, Lähteenmaa (2011) used the model of Greimas, according to whom people are agents whose driving forces are will and either internal or external obligation, and they are trying to perform as best as they can within their circumstances.

Lähteenmaa (2011) discovered six different types of activities which the youth were striving for, which ranged from trying to live sparingly and keep their spirits up to finding employment or holding on to at least some form of activity. Their agency was restricted by external circumstances such as poverty, but also internal factors like passivation and uncertainty, which they tried to battle by striving to make plans and remain active despite these circumstances. Lähteenmaa (2011) called this type of activity 'over-tuned agency', where the youth were making conscious efforts to stay positive and exercise their agency. The youth also tried their best to make it on their own, without help from family or relatives, and only mentioned a potential partner that supported them but rarely any larger group or safety net.

For her part, Mäntyneva (2019) studied how rehabilitative work enforces the agency of the unemployed. She views agency as a dynamic process and a relationship between an individual, communities and society. An individual's agency is based on their individual and collective resources and abilities as well as the ways in which the surrounding societal constructions and social practices of services create possibilities for enforcing agency and functional capabilities. While functional capabilities refer to potential abilities, agency means actual possibilities for action and activity. As well as Jyrkämä (2007), Mäntyneva (2019) also discusses the modalities of agency, but formulates them as person's motivations and intentions (want to), their capabilities (be able to) and knowledge (knowing), restrictions and necessities (have to), their feelings and values (feeling) as well as options and possibilities (be capable to). Out of these, necessities best reflect an individual's lack of freedom and societal control, while agency can also be restricted by a person's age, gender, cultural background or environment.

According to Mäntyneva (2019), a person's increased capabilities were best reflected in the participant's experience of capability and increased resources. One example of these capabilities experienced by those who had participated in rehabilitative work is a regular daily rhythm. Participation also increased their resources, for example through the growth of self-esteem. In addition to this, the participant's experience of the growth of their competence and their ability to take initiative were examples of their increased capabilities. The participants felt that they needed something meaningful to do, professional guidance, the feeling of voluntary participation and continuity. Their agency was increased through positive experiences and the feeling of being appreciated, since the sense of being accepted and treated as equal enforced a person's resources and the feeling of capability. This kind of approach is similar to the way how Juhila (2002) describes the inclusive model of social work, which focuses on the importance of active citizenship, civil society and different communities, where the aim of social workers is to empower and support their clients.

Participation in different activities in pairs or as a group also increases a feeling of shared agency, where mutual goals are reached as a collective. The factor that contradicted the aim of enforcing a person's agency was whether the participation in rehabilitative work was voluntary or forced. This also supports Juhila's (2002) view of the way how the unemployed are often more controlled by the official, since they are forced to participate in services such as rehabilitative work or work try-outs. According to Mäntyneva (2019), the participant's motivation and commitment to the service was also influenced by whether they had something positive to look forward to in their horizon. As also shown by Creed and Klisch (2005), intentions and future plans help people gain a more positive future outlook, which provides meaning to participation and gives a feeling of empowerment as well as

emancipation. However, since the living situations of many participants were already difficult enough so that maintaining it was already a great task, the service did not necessarily succeed in increasing their agency. For some, participating in the labour market or education was secondary or not even something that they hoped for, and the main goal was to increase their already depleted resources.

In turn, Elonen, Niemelä and Saloniemi (2017) studied the effects that activation measures such as rehabilitative work, subsidized labour and work try-outs have on the agency of the long-term unemployed. In addition to this, they focused on the ways in which the activation measures influenced the perception of the unemployed of their own resources in the labour market and life in general. They based their research for example on the writings of Fryer (in Elonen, Niemelä & Saloniemi, 2017), according to whom the main cause for the negative psychosocial effects of unemployment is the financial hardship brought upon by it, since poverty restricts agency by hindering the setting of long-term goals and dampening a positive outlook for the future.

Elonen et al. (2017) discovered three kinds of activity types among the long-term unemployed they interviewed for their project. Those belonging to the first type have a clear and realistic desire to join the labour market and good resources for it, such as long history of employment and a good health, For people in this group, employment services are mainly a way to improve their limitations related to the labour market. The people belonging to the second type had no desire or faith in joining the labour market. They have several limitations such as a spotty employment history or multiple health issues. In addition, those belonging to the second type are more likely to have a so-called service career, because instead of employment they have participated in a continuum of different kinds of employment services. Finally, the people belonging to the third type have interests and efforts that are focused outside the labour market as well as the employment services, such as a hobby. They participate when necessary to avoid sanctions, but gain meaning and content into their lives through other channels.

4. Methodology

4.1 Data

The following section presents information about the methods that were used for gathering the data that was utilized in this research project. Since the aim was to collect information about the experiences that the unemployed had had regarding employment services, qualitative methods seemed to be most suitable for this purpose, and therefore semi-structured interviewing was selected as the main research method. The research scale was also kept rather limited, so that it would be easier to study the topic in depth, in addition to which content analysis was utilized in order to simplify the analysing process and make it easier to spot recurring patterns or themes in the data. Moreover, the goal of the project was not to prove certain previously developed hypotheses, but instead focus on the results that could be inferred through the analysing process. In addition to this, the goal was to remain as objective as possible during the research process and focus on giving the unemployed who were interviewed a chance to get their voices heard.

After introducing the utilized methods more thoroughly, some background information about the interviewees is also presented, such as the place where they were recruited from, the reasons for selecting them as interviewees as well as their age, educational background and the kinds of employment services they had participated in. The methods that were utilized for analysing the data are introduced in section 4.2.

This research project uses qualitative data, that was gathered through semi-structured interviews with the unemployed who have participated in the services provided by the labour force service centres. Interviewing is the most used data collection method in qualitative research, and semi-structured interviews are also very commonly used since they provide the researcher with the ability to focus on certain subjects while preserving the richness of the data in order to gain a more in-depth view of the topic (Alsaawi, 2014). Semi-structured interviews are especially useful in situations where the topic is not yet well-known, since they provide information about the experiences of the interviewees as well as the meanings that they attribute to them. This type of interviewing may also help the researcher broaden their horizons regarding the topic in question and gain more insights, if they provide the interviewees enough space to talk (Adams, 2010). Semi-structured interviewing is also a good method for discussing sensitive topics, such as unemployment and alcoholism, which also came up during the interviews since they were carried out at A-Kilta.

The interviews were carried out at A-Kilta’s three community cabins in Rautaharkko, Kissanmaa and Härmälä. The interviewees were recruited during the Summer, while I was doing my internship at A-Kilta where I worked for three months. There were originally nine interviews, but one had to be discarded since the interviewee had not participated in the employment services that the project is focused on. The interviewees were either working at the cabins through a work try-out or rehabilitative work, or visited them regularly.

During the interview they were asked about their educational and work background as well as experiences with different employment services, what they liked or did not like about them and how the services could be improved in their opinion, in addition to why they had become unemployed in the first place. Through these questions, information about the interviewees experiences with the employment services and possible improvements that they required was uncovered, which was used to answer the research questions ‘How do the unemployed perceive the services that are provided for them?’ and ‘How could the employment services be improved in their opinion?’.

However, the interviewees were also free to discuss anything that was related to their experiences regarding unemployment and the employment services. The interviews lasted from fifteen minutes to approximately one hour.

Rehabilitative work (f.e. TyPa)	Work try-out	Subsidized work	Social rehabilitation	Rehabilitation course	Rehabilitative work (theory)	Other Courses (f.e. Työtao)
8	5	1 (2 pending approval)	1	1	1	2

Table 1: Services that the interviewees had participated in

The interviewees ages varied between 20 and 60 years old, and three of them were females in addition to five males. Their educational background ranged from elementary school to art school and college level education. They had also participated in different kinds of courses related to for example handicrafts and restoring old buildings, but had often left these courses unfinished. Three of the interviewees had also dropped out of school. They had been unemployed from less than a year to 12 years, and had become unemployed for example due to health issues, alcohol abuse and due to having to take care of a sick mother. Most of the interviewees had participated in rehabilitative work either

through the employment office or Työllistämispalvelut (TyPa), three had been in work-try outs and two had attended other courses such as job searching course or a CV course provided by Työotalo. One of the interviewees had also participated in rehabilitative theory sessions and social rehabilitation, while only one had also done subsidised labour and later on become employed at the same place.

4.2 Analysis

Content analysis was selected as the analysis method, because it makes it possible for a researcher to go through large amounts of data considerably easily in a systematic way (Stemler, 2001). It also helps the researcher to discover emerging patterns in the data and categorize it based on certain themes related to the research project. Content analysis can be used to analyse textual data in either print, electronic or verbal form, as was the case in this study. There are several approaches to content analysis, such as conventional, directed and summative analysis. Conventional analysis can be used when there is not much research done on the topic and there is no specific theory guiding the analysis. Instead of being defined in advance, the codes emerge from the text through multiple readings. This approach is also called inductive category development (Hsieh, Shannon, 2005). In directed approach, the analysis is guided by theory or previous research, and the goal is to either validate or conceptually extend an existing theory. This theory is used to make predictions about the variables and determine relationships between codes, which is why this approach is also called deductive category application. In summative content analysis, certain words are identified in the text in order to understand the context of the words. Here the focus is more on the usage of the words instead of their meaning. This type of analysis is also called manifest content analysis, but when the focus extends into interpreting the meanings behind the words, the analysis becomes latent. Summative analysis is often used while analysing larger manuscripts such as textbooks, and begins with counting the occurrence of chosen words (Hsieh, Shannon, 2005). In content analysis, the categories are derived from the text through analysis or are directly expressed in it, after which the relationships between them are identified. This can be done for example by using a coding scheme, which assists the researcher in organizing the data into categories. The process and rules of analysis are included into the coding scheme, and they should be systematic, scientific and logical. Using a coding scheme enforces the trustworthiness of the research. The main differences between these three types of content analysis are summarized in the table on the next page.

TABLE 4: Major Coding Differences Among Three Approaches to Content Analysis

<i>Type of Content Analysis</i>	<i>Study Starts With</i>	<i>Timing of Defining Codes or Keywords</i>	<i>Source of Codes or Keywords</i>
Conventional content analysis	Observation	Codes are defined during data analysis	Codes are derived from data
Directed content analysis	Theory	Codes are defined before and during data analysis	Codes are derived from theory or relevant research findings
Summative content analysis	Keywords	Keywords are identified before and during data analysis	Keywords are derived from interest of researchers or review of literature

Table 2: Three approaches to content analysis

Source: Hshieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1286

The interviews were transcribed using Microsoft Word, and their length varied between two and seven pages, there were 28 pages of interview transcriptions in total. The coding method that was used was a combination of emergent and a priori coding, since some of the codes were already drafted based on the employment services that the interviewees had participated in, and the focus of the research project which was how these services could be improved as well as how they affected the agency of the participants, while others emerged during the overview of the data (Stemler, 2001). This type of coding can also be called conventional content analysis as described by Hsieh and Shannon (2005), since approximately one third of the codes were defined during the analysis and derived from the data, namely A-Kilta, benefits, online courses and other courses.

The coding process was started by going over the material looking for mentions of any specific employment service or the services in general, in addition to which specific attention was paid to any criticism, praise or improvements regarding them. In order to simplify the analysing process, the interviews were also coded based on the services that the interviewee had attended (*see next page*). Some additional codes that were used were employment, education, unemployment and alcoholism. Later on, code groups were developed from codes that fit together, such as online courses or other services. On the second and third round of coding the search focused on anything that was somehow related to agency or the lack of it. After going over the data several times, the interviewees comments regarding different services as well other codes were grouped together, which functioned as the basis for the following Findings chapter. At first, the services that the interviewees had participated in

functioned as an outline and headlines for the chapter, where comments regarding their benefits as well as potential improvements to the services and criticism about them were also included. However, later on these findings were re-arranged based on what were deemed to be the main findings of this study in the Conclusions chapter, namely forced participation, continuity and benefits, as per the feedback provided by the checkers of this thesis, and the services were utilized as sub-headings for the paragraphs.

Codes:

Agency	Improvements
A-Kilta	Online courses (50s course, CV course)
Alcoholism	Other courses (rehabilitation/theory, rehabilitation course, job searching course)
Benefits	Praise
Criticism	Rehabilitative work
Education	Social rehabilitation
Employment	Subsidized work/pay subsidy
Employment services	Unemployment

Due to ethical considerations, the interviewees were required to fill out consent forms before the beginning of the interview in order to make sure that they could be recorded, and that the collected materials could be stored and used for further research. To ensure the security of the collected data and prevent unauthorized access to it, no data was stored on computers that are open to the public, but instead it was temporarily saved in password protected emails, and finally stored on a personal computer with no access to outsiders. The interviews were also anonymized during the transcription process, so that any names that the interviewees mentioned could not be recognized in order to protect the privacy and anonymity of the interviewees. While discussing more sensitive topics such as alcoholism, the interviewees were not directly asked about it since this was not so pertinent for the project, but instead they were given the opportunity to bring up the topic themselves if they were willing to talk about it.

5. Findings

The interviewees had mainly participated in rehabilitative work, subsidized labour and work try-outs, while one of them had participated in a couple of online courses during the corona pandemic, and another interviewee had also attended social rehabilitation as well as day-long rehabilitation sessions. These sessions were more focused on theoretical topics such as debt settlement, but also included visits to the museum as well as bowling. The benefits of participation were a free meal and a bus ticket as well as additional 9e per day, but since the interviewee attended four of these sessions, they tended to get a bit repetitive. Despite of this, he had found the sessions quite pleasant.

A third interviewee had participated in a rehabilitation course organized by Kiipula's vocational school, which was focused on finding out different places where she could try working. For her it was just what she needed at that point in life, since there they took into account her physical and psychological resources in addition to treating her with compassion, and she could get help as well as answers to the questions that she had. In addition to this, the focus was more on what the person who was in rehabilitation wanted, which is essential in a situation where person's resources have been severely depleted, because this not only enforces their agency but also empowers them in other ways. The course is comparable to personal support programs discussed by Sage (2017), which were more successful in enforcing the feeling of agency as well as counteracting the loss of status caused by unemployment, than programs that were only focused on providing them with some sort of labour.

A fourth interviewee had participated in a two-week long job searching course where they had gone over the Windows Office systems and writing a CV as well as looking for a job. He had found regular participation to be a good thing, and what he liked best was that they had a good and enthusiastic trainer who also managed to get the participants exited. One of the interviewees had also volunteered previously at A-Kilta before starting rehabilitative work at one of their community cabins, in addition to which she had participated in a work try-out there.

As discussed by Juhila (2002), in the Finnish welfare state social work functions as a safety net for those who have fallen outside the general service systems. The unemployed are also more controlled by the officials, who expect them to be more accountable than those who actively participate in the labour market (Juhila, 2002). The employment service system that the interviewees had also had to participate in so that they could receive full benefits, as according to the recent activation model the unemployed had to attend rehabilitative work etc. for five days within a three-month period or their benefits would be cut by 4.65 % (Ikävalko & Sullström, 2018), can also be seen as a way of controlling them. On the other hand, as can be seen from the results, for several people services like rehabilitative

work can function as a support system, since by gaining more routines and obligations to their lives as well as succeeding in attending the services regularly, the unemployed may also find a way to gain more control over their own lives.

The rest of the chapter is organized based on the main findings, mainly the importance of voluntary participation, continuity and being compensated for their labour and participation in the form of some additional benefits, which are discussed more thoroughly in the following section. The services that the interviewees had participated in are utilized as sub-headings, since one of the aims of this project was to research how these services could be improved in the opinion of the unemployed, and they include commentary on how these services may affect the agency of the unemployed. Finally, the effects of alcoholism on employment as well as participation in the abovementioned services will be examined more carefully, because the interviewees were selected from A-Kilta and some of them brought up these topics during the interview. Since according to Juhila (2002) current society is largely based on individualism, consumerism and choice, because of which many people who have become marginalized see themselves as failures, this burden can be twofold for those of the unemployed who are also alcoholics, since on top of not being able to participate in the labour market they also lack the ability to control their drinking.

5.1 Voluntary participation

5.1.1 Rehabilitative work

While studying the unemployed who had participated in rehabilitative work, Mäntyneva (2019) argued that forced participation contradicts the aim of enforcing the participant's agency through these kinds of services. She also discovered that whether the participation in rehabilitative work was voluntary or forced was the factor which contradicted this aim the most. One of the unemployed who had been interviewed for this project and had been forced into rehabilitative labour said, that this was only so that the unemployment statistics would look a little better.

H5: "So, I don't really know about this rehabilitative work, they should organize more work for people or arrange things better so that there wouldn't be any need for these kinds of places. I mean this is, they use it just to make the statistics look better, or I don't know if they are able to cover unemployment statistics when people participate in rehabilitative work or work try-outs, since we are after all unemployed the whole time".¹

Lack of agency in the form of forced participation is also a key factor that influences a person's motivation and willingness to work as well as their satisfaction with their placement. As shown by Creed and Klisch (2005), this further on influences their well-being, since dissatisfaction influences a person's future outlook by making it more negative. Their study was based on for example the works of Jahoda who developed the latent deprivation model in 1981, according to which the lack of latent benefits of work such as a time structure and broader social contacts, have a larger effect on the well-being of the unemployed than lack of financial resources (Creed and Klisch, 2005). However, when a person has the ability use their talents, participation becomes significantly more pleasant and fulfilling, as was the case with an interviewee who had worked as a nurse for several years, but had to quit due to health issues. While participating in rehabilitative work later on, she was able to take part in developing a care-workshop for people in rehabilitative work who also considered working in the field of healthcare.

Rehabilitative work was criticized for having too little to do so that most of the time was just spent drinking coffee. One interviewee suggested that someone should market the workshops to people who provided them so that there would be more of them. Another interviewee thought that rehabilitative work was aimed more towards maintaining general wellbeing than actual employment. She also criticized the way how in some places people did not bother to show up and were not punished for this, even though there probably would have been more motivated candidates eager to take their place. Rehabilitative work was also criticized for having a poor quality in several places, and the way how people were forced to go there did not increase their motivation.

¹ H5: "Että, emmää tiiä tästä kuntouttavasta, järjestäis ihmisille vaan enemmän tai paremmin töitä niin ei tarvis tällasia olla ollenkaan. Että täähän on, tällähän nyt sitten saadaan niitä tilastoja, vai saadaanko tällä tilastoja peiteltyä näistä työttömistä kun on kuntouttavassa vai tai työkokeilussa niin, no työttömiähän me kuitenkin kokoajan ollaan."

5.1.2 Work try-out & pay subsidy

When asked what she liked most about her work-try out, one of the interviewees said that it was the way how no one was constantly telling her what she had to do and she could work at her own pace.

H3: “Probably that you could like do things at your own pace and there was no one constantly behind your back saying do this and do that, and also that the clients were quite welcoming and so on, mostly that you could interact with the clients. Probably that.”²

The ability to work at one’s own pace without being bossed around increases the feeling of agency, since a person is capable to choose their own tasks, as well as to decide when they complete those. Being able to choose one’s placement is also a key factor that influences a person’s satisfaction with their workplace, which further on affects their well-being as discussed by Creed and Klisch (2005). As was the case with rehabilitative work, a couple of the interviewees also criticized the employment services in general for being only meant for cleaning out the unemployment statistics. One interviewee criticised them for circulating people from one system to another, and that people were placed somewhere only because the system requires it. Only one of the interviewees did not have anything to criticize about the services he had participated in, but he had been unemployed for less than a year, and was just at the beginning his employment service career.

One of the interviewees had been employed through a pay subsidy, while two of them were waiting for a placement. The interviewee who had been in subsidized labour praised the way how she had been able to freely choose the places where she had worked at and was very satisfied. She also felt that it was a very good system for those who otherwise had difficulties finding work such as the long-term unemployed, because it gave them confidence that at least someone found them suitable for work.

² H3: ”Varmaan siitä et sai tehdä niinkun omaan tahtiin että kukaan ei ollu niskan takana kokoajan sanomassa niinkun että tee näin ja noin, ja sit siitä että asiakkaat otti hyvin vastaan ja silleen, lähinnä tää että saa olla asiakkaitten kans tekemisissä. Varmaan se.”

5.2 Continuity

The unemployed who participated in rehabilitative work and were studied by Mäntyneva (2019) wanted professional guidance, something meaningful to do as well as feelings of voluntary participation and continuity. This was also the case with some of the unemployed who were interviewed for this project. Work try-outs were criticized for not providing participants with continuity, since several places just take a new trainee after the try-out is over. One interviewee said that the try-outs could be improved by providing the participants the same benefits, and if participation would help them to move into subsidized labour. Another interviewee also thought that there should be some continuity especially the youth and the long-term unemployed, so this would give them hope. She was especially outraged by the way how some places exploited people in work try-outs and expected them to put in the same amount of work as someone working on a salary.

H2: "So, I think that it's outrageous like exploitation, and especially when it comes to youngsters because the youth start working enthusiastically, they want that they are liked and their work input is respected so they don't have that kind of poker like or the courage to say about it if it goes to the workload being increased all the time, and then when a person wishes that now if I work really hard that this might be continuous, that I can work here with a pay subsidy or they even hire me here, because that kind of hope is always wanted that there would be continuity, and then the employer terminates it and takes a new 9 euro employee to work there even though it's the kind of place that would require like a permanent employee." ³

She also felt that especially for the youth and long-term unemployed, the thought of continuity helped them carry on and motivated them to work, in addition to which she also thought that there should be a support person in the workplace, to whom the trainee can tell what is going on during the day and who can advise them when they need assistance. Continuity is also important regarding agency, since the ability to make future plans enforces a person's agency as well as their future outlook, and further on improves their well-being, as shown by Creed and Klisch (2005).

³ H2: "Että siinä, mun mielestä se on tosi törkeetä niinkun hyväksikäyttöä ja varsinkin nuorten kohdalla vielä koska nuoret lähtee innoissaan tekeen, ne haluaa että niistä pidetään ja niiden työpanosta kunnioitetaan niin niillä ei oo semmosta pokeria niinkun eikä uskallusta sanoo sitten siitä asiasta että jos se alkaa meneen siihen että sitä työmäärää kasvatetaan koko aika ja sitten kun henkilö toivoo että nyt kun mä teen kunnolla töitä että tästä tulee sitten jatkuva että mä saan jatkaa täällä vielä vaikka palkkatuella taikka mut jopa palkataan tänne koska semmosta toivoahan aina halutaan että sille tulee jatkuvuutta, niin sit työntaja pätkäsee sen ja ottaa uuden yhdeksän euron ihmisen sinne töihin vaikka se ois semmonen kohde minne tarvittais niinkun vakituinen työntekijä"

The only thing the interviewee who had participated in subsidized labour criticized about it was the way how a person could only work at one place for a limited time, so that they lose a place where they could work at even with limitations, while an employer who necessarily cannot hire anyone with a full salary loses a worker.

H2: “There should also be the hope of continuity, and if a person who is difficult to employ like me, if I have reached the point where an employer has hired me through subsidized labour, in my opinion it reflects that the employer thinks that I’m capable to do this work. And while the employer might be a private entrepreneur who doesn’t have that much resources for hiring someone full-time, then the person who is in subsidized labour should have the ability to extend their working agreement even after the time limit, there is a certain time limit for how long a person can work with pay subsidy. It’s ridiculous that it ends there, since then the employer loses a worker and the employee loses a job where they could, even if they have some limitations, actually work at.”⁴

5.3 Benefits

5.3.1 Rehabilitative work

When discussing rehabilitative work, the interviewees mentioned a free meal as one of the benefits for participating. The spirit of the group was also praised, because since there were various kinds of people participating, no one was specified as being odd. One interviewee also mentioned how rehabilitative work gives people regularity and provides content in their lives, in addition to helping them to open up.

H4: “Yeah well, I don’t know, because basically when you think about it there are all kinds of people there, like those who are completely worn out, and I noticed at our care workshop [Hoivapaja] that some of them first of all had some difficulties with waking up in the morning, leaving home and attending the workshop. And then however after a few months they started showing up on time in the

⁴ H2:”Siinä pitää olla myös se toivo siitä jatkuvuudesta ja... jos vaikeesti työllistettävällä henkilöllä niinkun minullakin, jos mä oon päässy siihen kohtaan että työnantaja on hyväksynyt mut palkkatuella töihin niin mun mielestä se kuvastaa sitä että se työnantaja ajattelee että mä pystyn tekeen tätä työtä niin ja sitten kun työnantaja saattaa olla yksityisyrittäjä jolla on mahdollisti niinkun että ei oo taloudellisesti kauheesti resursseja palkata henkilöitä oikeesti, niin sillan pitää sitä palkkatukee nauttivan henkilön niin sitä työsuhdetta saada jatkaa vaikka se menee yli sen, sen, ömmm, sil on se tietty aikaraja... kuinka kauan saa palkkatuella olla. Se on ihan naurettavaa et se katkee siihen koska sillan työnantaja menettää työntekijän ja työntekijä menettää semmosen paikan missä hän niinkun pystyy, jos on rajoitteita niin pystyis tekemään sitä työtä.”

morning and were able to stay the whole day, they were capable of doing it. And then there were people like me, who didn't really have difficulties with it and who attended rehabilitative work just so they could get some more content into their lives, so that it wouldn't be just hanging around at home with nothing to do, especially during winter... So I like noticed there that some of them were in a really poor shape and all curled up inside, and when they had to be in a group they started opening up a bit and were capable of doing that, so I noticed that it was the most important benefit and what actually works in this system".⁵

These benefits have replaced some of the latent benefits of work discussed by Jahoda (in Creed & Klisch, 2005), and reflect the increased capabilities of the participants such as the ability to maintain a regular daily rhythm, which Mäntyneva (2019) also discovered during her studies. Another interviewee thought that rehabilitative work is suitable for people who have some limitations and want to voluntarily participate in order to remain spry and functional. For the people who had problems with alcohol abuse, rehabilitative work helps to prevent them from binge drinking, since they have some place to go to regularly.

H5: "Rehabilitative work is good in itself since people won't stay at home. That there is some reason to leave. And I have met many people who have gotten a place doing rehabilitative work and they take it seriously like they are going to work, and it is a good attitude that you are going to work and you don't have to, well many would be on a severe bender just if there were no activities like this." ⁶

These kinds of services are similar to the personal support programs studied by Sage (2017) during her research on the influence that loss of employment has on people's lives, and how active labour market programs affect this experience, since they also provide assistance to people with issues such as substance abuse or mental health problems. The experience of becoming unemployed had not been as negative for those who had participated in these support programs, since they were treated with

⁵ H4 " Niin no, en mä oikkeen tiedä kun se sinänsä kun siinä aattelee kun siinä on kaiken tasosia ihmisiä, semmottia että jotka on aivan räytyneitä, ja sitten kun mä huomasin siinä, siinä siinä meidän hoivapajalla niin oli semmottia joilla oli ensinnäkin vaikee aamulla herätä, vaikee lähtee liikkeelle, vaikee olla paikalla. Ja sitten ne kuiteski siinä muutaman kuukauden aikana niin ne rupes jo tuleen aamulla ajoissa, ne pysty oleen päivän, ne pysty tekeen sen, ja sitten oli semmottia niinkun minä, joilla ei mitään ongelmaa ollu sinänsä, että tuli sinne ja teki sen takia vaan sitä kuntouttavaa työtä että, eli et siihen tuli jotain sisältöä vähän enemmän, ettei se ollu pelkästään sitä yksin pyörimistä ja kotona pyörimistä ja ei ollu mitään tekemistä, talvella varsinkin... Eli että niinkun mä huomasin tosiaan siellä että ne oli tosiaan surkeessa kunnossa ja itseensä käpertyneitä ja ne joutu oleen porukassa, niin ne niinku avautu jonkun verran, rupes oleen, ja sit ne pysty niin niin sen mä huomasin että sehän siinä on se tärkein hyöty, sehän siinä toimii."

⁶ H5: " Mutta mutta, ohan toi kuntouttava työtoiminta siinä sinänsä hyvä ettei ihmiset jää kotiin. Että joku syy että lähtee. Ja oon mä tavannu paljon sellasia ihmisiä että kun ne on saanu kuntouttavan työtoimintapaikan niin ne ottaa sen ihan tosissaan että hän lähtee töihin ja se on ihan hyvä asenne sellanen että lähtee töihin ja on syy ettei tartte, no monella ois ihan kauheet ryyppyputket päällä ja ihan vaan sen takia että jos tällasta toimintaa ei olis."

respect and the advisers were willing to co-operate in order to find a suitable job for the participants. However, for the participants of work programs that focused on getting people quickly back to the labour market, the experience had been more negative since the advisers treated them condescendingly, and they were often directed into unsuitable jobs or training (Sage, 2017).

It was also important that a person's resources were taken into consideration, since a person who is in a work try-out or rehabilitative work does not necessarily have the same resources as someone working with a salary. Mäntyneva (2019) also mentions especially increased resources as one of the main benefits of rehabilitative work, where the participants for example experienced growth of their competence, while their ability to take initiative also reflected their increased capabilities. The participants also wanted something meaningful to do, professional guidance as well as feelings of voluntary participation and continuity. Positive experiences and the feeling of being appreciated also increased their agency, since the feeling of being accepted and treated as equal enhances a person's sense of their own capability. In addition to this, a feeling of shared agency increases through different kinds of activities that are carried out in pairs or as a group, during which mutual goals can be reached as a collective.

5.3.2 Work try-out

Work try-outs were criticized for not including the same benefits as rehabilitative work, which are a free meal, a bus ticket and an extra 9e/day on top of regular unemployment benefits. A couple of the interviewees thought that it was free labour, since the participants had to work up to 8 hours a day and practically do the same tasks as someone with a salary.

H4: "It wasn't my thing at all. Because I didn't see any use of it, no use... For me a work try-out was that you have to be there... seven to eight hours a day and you get only regular unemployment benefits. And then you do it for months, and it doesn't require anything, and the employer just says bye after a couple of months. So in principle, the feeling is that you have been working for free in there, there is no sense in that, you should get some compensation or they should change the time shorter or something." ⁷

⁷ H4: "No mun mielestä se ei ollu ollenkaan mun juttuni. Kun en mä, mä en nähny siinä pätääkään hyötyä, että mitään hyötyä...No mä tiedän mun kohdallani niin se oli että kun se työkokeilu on kuiteskin että sä joudut oleen siinä ainaskin sillon... seittemän-kaheksan tuntia siinä päivittäin, sä et saa siitä kun tavallisen työmarkkinatuen. Ja sit sä teet sitä kuukausia, ja sit se ei edellytä mitään, siis työntaja sanoo vaan kahden kuukauden päästä että moi. Niin niin sähän oot tehny periaatteessa, tunne on siinä se että sä oot tehny ihan ilmatteeksi siellä, että ei siinä oo mitään järkee, kyllä siitä joku mun mielestä joku korvaus tai se pitäis muuttaa jotenkin että se aika lyhkäsemmäks tai jotain."

This type of uncertainty and the inability to influence the length of one's working contract raises the feeling of lacking agency, in addition to which a person's motivation decreases due to the lack of being rewarded for their hard work.

One of the interviewees thought that participating in a work try-out had been very useful, and he had gained more work experience for what he wanted to do in the future. Another interviewee praised work try-out for being an eye-opening experience:

H2: *Musta Lammas, that was probably the most eye-opening place for me. Well, it used to be there in the city centre, an old wooden building where, well, it was run by the congregation and there was this kind of a service point that was open during the day for like homeless people and then those who had substance abuse issues. That there you could get food and coffee and just hang out, get clean clothes and shower. It was certainly kind of value, what I like really appreciate like that, at that point it was kind of an eye-opening place, and I liked being there really much.*⁸

5.3.3 Pay subsidy

As an example of the benefits that are related to the employment services and more specifically pay subsidies, one of the interviewees who considered starting subsidized work mentioned how organizations could not pay as high a salary as the city, mentioning a wage gap of close to 800 euros.

H5: *“And now I've sent a message to my counsellor if he could check for subsidized work, I'm entitled to a full subsidy, something from the city at Huoltso or Tastu, so if they had some places that need.. And it's those associations like A-Kilta, they have a really shitty pay, if I'd come here it would be only just a bit over 1000 euros, but if you get to work for the city, it's not some association so they have to give a bit better pay, well it's 2 to 3 hours per day, longer days, but was it around 1000... you get around 1700-1800e there”.*⁹

⁸ H2: *“Mustasta Lampaasta. Se oli varmasti mulle se kaikista herättelevin paikka. No, sehän oli tuolla keskustassa, vanha puutalo missä tuota noin, se oli seurakunnan pitämä että siellä oli niinkun tämmönen huoltopiste joka oli päivisin auki niinkun asunnottomille ja sitten tämmösille päihteittenkäyttäjille. Että sieltä sai ruokaa ja kahvia ja siä sai oleskella, sai puhtaita vaatteita, käydä suihkussa. Se oli varmasti semmonen niinkun arvo, mitä mä niinkun arvostan niinku se, siinä kohtaa niin se oli semmonen herättelevä paikka, ja mä tykkäsin hirveesti olla siellä.*

⁹ H5: *“Ja nyt mä oon laittanu viestiä sille omavalmentajalle että jos se kattois palkkatuki, mulla on täyteen palkkatukeen oikeus, kaupungilta jotain Huoltsoilta tai Tastusta niin jos sieltä sattuis löytyyn paikkoja jotka tarvii.. Ja se on noi järjestöt niinkun A-Kiltakin niin sehän maksaa ihan paskaa palkkaa, ei jos tänne tulis palkkatuella niin sehän on ihan joku ihan vähän reilu tonni, mut jos pääsee kaupungin hommiin niin kaupunkihan ei oo mikään yhdistys nii ne joutuu maksaan sen vähän paremman palkan, että onhan siinä muutama-pari tuntia päivässä, pitempiä päiviä mutta onko se joku 1000 ... jotain 1700-1800 saa.”*

5.4 Social rehabilitation

For the interviewee who had participated in social rehabilitation, it provided something to do during retirement. However, he did basically the same tasks there as during rehabilitative work, such as dismantling old computers and furniture, since he attended both at the same place, but because the title had changed, he no longer gained the same benefits as before. He thought that the service could be improved by providing even a small compensation, since he still had to work four hours a day. His counsellor had also felt the same and had tried to get him a compensation of 4,5 euros per day which is half of what the interviewee had made during rehabilitative work, but the social services had denied this.

H1: “Well I don’t know about that, well there’s always that that you’d like to get a small compensation for those, since you were always there for four hours anyway and... And you also did some like actual work there, you took apart some computers for example and whatever else you had there, since it was recycling so you’d just salvage everything you could from those, and like dismantle furniture and whatever. But I don’t really know what you could, well, there’s always the small compensation, it bummed me out a bit when I didn’t get the 9 euros, it would have been a welcome addition.”¹⁰

5.5 Online courses

The effects of the corona virus could also be seen in the way how some of the services provided by the employment office had moved online. One of the interviewees had attended two online courses provided by Työotalo, one that was aimed at updating and polishing one’s CV, and another aimed at people in their 50s to see how the labour market looked like for them. During both of the courses there were some technical difficulties, but the interviewee thought that the CV course was the most useful of the employment services that she had participated in.

¹⁰ H1: ” No emmää sitäkään, no ainahan se tietysti on että sitä haluais pienen korvauksen niistä että kun siä kumminkin neljä tuntia oltiin aina ja. Ja siä tehtiin siis oikeen välillä niinkun työtäkin että purettiin jotain tietokoneita vaikka ja sitten mitä mitä ny kaikkee muutakin siellä, kun se oli kierrätystä niin otettiin kaikki talteen näistä mistä nyt vaan jotain sai irti niin, ja sillain huonekaluja purettiin ja mitä kaikkee. Mutta en mä en tiedä mitä siinä nyt, no, ainahan se on se pieni rahakorvaus se, kyllähän se vähän harmitti kun jäi se yhdeksän euroa, oishan se ollu aina tervetullut lisä vielä.”

H8: “It was really good, so it was like priv... just me and the instructor so it was like one-on-one, so it was, it was really good that we like went through the punctuation and spacing in my CV so that it’s like modern. So that was really important. Like that one is really worth participating in.”¹¹

The only thing she criticized was that the course was so extensive and only included one session, so that it ran very long and the organizer did not give any estimate on how long it would take. She did not find the course aimed at people in their 50s as useful although she gained a bit more money from participation, and felt that she had fallen between the cracks due to issues that were beyond her control. This also portrays the lack of agency experienced by some of the unemployed who were interviewed for the project.

5.6 Alcoholism, agency and employment

Agency is often seen as the opposite of helplessness, relating to the ability to control and manage one’s life. This term has also been widely used by the authorities while discussing groups that have difficulties with life management, such as alcoholics, drug addicts, or the disabled. Especially in the fields of employment and education, several forms of guidance and rehabilitation have been developed in order to enforce the agency of these groups (Eteläpelto, Heiskanen & Collin 2011). Out of the services that have been examined in this thesis, particularly rehabilitative work and social rehabilitation are targeted towards people who suffer from issues such as alcoholism.

Since the interviews were carried out at A-Kilta, a couple of the interviewees also discussed the difficulties of maintaining a job while suffering from alcoholism, and how it often unexpectedly takes over daily life.

H5: “I wasn’t drinking full time, or when you go on a bender it becomes full time, they come and go, when I was younger and it (drinking) started it (going on a bender) happened twice or thrice a year, and then I’d be sober for four or five months, and suddenly for some reason things get out of hand and there I’d go again. It’s not that long since the last time it happened, but they (benders) have been happening lately, yeah they occur regularly. One of my friends also has the same thing, the same issue that ... they (benders) occur every five months, well for me they have occurred every three or

¹¹ H8: ” Se oli tosi hyvä, siis se oli niinkun yk., minä ja se ohjaaja et se oli niinkun kahden kesken vaan, niin se oli, se oli tosi hyvä et se katottiin niinkun pilkun paikat suunnilleen ja välilyönnit mun CV: stä et se on niinkun nykyaikainen. Et se oli niinkun tosi tärkeä. Et semmonen kannattaa kyllä käydä.”

four months lately and things get out of hand, and then you either call an ambulance or go into rehabilitation”.¹²

Few of the interviewees also mentioned how they had dropped out of different kinds of courses and rehabilitative work due to drinking, or received several warnings until the final one. Two of them had eventually become unemployed because of their alcohol abuse.

H1: “Well booze was the biggest... And the absences caused by that and unauthorized absences and such, so that was probably the biggest (reason) then... And in the mornings I probably smelled a bit, and they were looking at it like ‘so you decided to come to work almost drunk then’. And then when they made enough remarks and said about it and there were warnings, and then they gave the final warning.”¹³

One interviewee also discussed the hazards of alcoholism, and the ways in which it differs from regular drinking or partying. Since alcoholics are not able to control their drinking, they often keep going until something serious happens, and he had for example suffered from pancreatitis twice because of this.

H5: “It’s not funny business that, drinking is pretend fun for one day, but then it goes to laying on the sofa and staring dulled at the tv and drinking a can of beer per hour through the day. Until your ... fails totally and... Last time I had to call an ambulance for myself and, my feet didn’t hold anymore, it goes, I’m getting that old already that I can’t go on that long and on top of that it’s so bloody stupid playing with your own life.”¹⁴

¹² H5: ” Ei se oo ollu mitään täyspäivästä, taikka siis on se sillon kun se tulee se putki päälle niin se on täyspäivästä, että niitä tulee, tästä nuorempana kun se alko niin kaks kolme kertaa vuodessa, sitten taas ollaan neljä viis kuukautta raittiina ja sitte jostain syystä se vaan lähtee lapasesta taas ja taas mentii. Eikä siitä viimesestäkään ole pitkää aikaa mutta niitä on tullu tässä, niitä tulee sillain tasasesti joo. Yks kaveri sellanen E, sillä on ihan sama, sama ongelma että kolme-neljä, mitä se sano, sillä tulee viiden kuukauden välein, no mulla tulee kolmen-neljän kuukauden välein on tässä viime aikoina tullu se ja se vaan lähtee lapasesta ja sitte joko soitetaan ambulanssi tai sitte mennään katkolle.”

¹³ H1: ” No viinahan siinä sitten oli se suurin... Ja sitten ne sen tuomat poissaolot ja luvattomat poissaolot ja tämmöset että sehän se on ollu se suurin sitten... Ja tais sitä aamulla sitten aina vähän tuoksahtaakin niin sitäkin tietysti katteltiin vähän että sitten että tultiin sillain melkein hönössä töihin. Ja se nyt siihen kun sitten tarpeeks huomauteltiin ja sanottiin ja tuli niitä varoituksia ja sitten annettiin se viimeinen varotus.”

¹⁴ H5: ”Se ei oo kuule kivaa touhua sellane, se ryyppääminen on sen yhden päivän sellasta niinkun, niin no olevinaan kivaa mutta sit se menee siihen että makaat sohvalle ja tuijotat tylsänä telkkaria ja juot tunnin välein kaljatölkin vuorokauden läpeensä. Kunnes kunto pettää ihan täydellisesti ja... Viimeks mää jouduin soittaamaan ambulanssin ittelleni ja, ei enää jalat pitäny se menee, alkaa oleen ikää sen verran jo että ei sitä kauaa jaksa ja se on kaikenlisäks niin saakelin tyhmää hengellä leikkimistä.”

Regarding lack of agency, another interviewee also mentioned that when it comes to drinking, for some reason things just often get out of hand. This is why services like rehabilitative work or social rehabilitation may be helpful for people suffering from alcohol abuse, since participation helps them to limit their drinking, because they have to attend it from three to four days a week.

H1: “Well at Mielen ry it was that because it was three times a week and I had it on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, so I always tried to motivate myself to go there... so that there weren't these, if you've got money then quickly it goes to tipping through the whole week and... so it kind of cuts it, or you are like now I'm not drinking then, that it was only during the weekend if you had to. But it was a good system for me that it was three times a week and every other day. Because booze tends to taste for me. It's a bit like that, it gets a man going and quickly you just forget a couple weeks”.¹⁵

¹⁵ H1: ” No tää Mielen ry:n oli ainakin se, että koska se oli kolmena päivänä viikossa ja mulla oli se sillain että mä olin maanantai, keskiviikko ja perjantai, niin tota siinä oli sitten se että kun kumminkin yritti itteensä motivoida sinne menemiseen...ettei tullu sitten näitä, että siinä ois äkkiä jos rahat sai niin viikko menny ja tissutellu siinä ja... että se niinkun katkas sitten aina, tai sai sillain että nyt ei oteta, että se oli sitten vaikka sitte viikonloppuna jos tarvii. Mutta se oli kyllä ihan hyvä systeemi mulla just se että se oli mulla kolmena päivänä ja sillain just joka toinen päivä. Kun vähän tuppaa toi viina meneen, maistuun. Se on vähän semmosta, pistää äkkiä miehen meneen vaan ja unohtuu äkkiä pari viikkoo.

6. Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine the employment services in Tampere from the perspective of the unemployed who attended Tampereen A-Kilta, in order to discover how those services could be improved in their opinion. The effect that the employment services have on the agency of the unemployed was also examined. The participants were either working at the community cabins of A-Kilta in Tampere as a part of their rehabilitative work and work try-out, or visited there regularly. The ways in which alcoholism, that few of the participants suffered from, affected their ability to work as well as agency was also analysed.

The people who attended A-Kilta perceived that voluntary participation in the services provided by the employment office was important. In cases where the interviewees had the possibility of choosing their own placement, whether it was rehabilitative work or subsidized labour, they were very satisfied with the employment services. The voluntary participation seems to be essential for enforcing the agency of the unemployed, and this was also brought up by Eteläpelto, Heiskanen & Collin (2011), since according to them agency is not possible if a person does not have the ability to influence things and make their own choices or decisions. In addition to voluntary participation, the interviewees found some sort of continuity to be important, since this makes it easier for them to make future plans which also improves their future outlook. Those research participants who were interviewed by Mäntyneva (2019) while she was studying the agency of the unemployed, also found continuity and the sense of voluntary participation important.

Moreover, the interviewees wanted some sort of compensation for their labour especially in work try-outs, since this often requires them to put in the same amount of work as a person working with a salary. Without this compensation, there was often the feeling of being exploited or used as free labour. For those people who had attended rehabilitative work and been interviewed by Mäntyneva (2019), the feeling of being appreciated was also important. Their agency had been increased through positive experiences, since the sense of being accepted and treated as equal enforces a person's resources as well as their feeling of capability. In many cases the participants who had been interviewed for this study had also felt that they had only been placed somewhere in order to clean out the unemployment statistics, or just because the system required it. Mäntyneva (2019) also pointed out how forced participation contradicts the goal of enforcing the agency of the unemployed. Furthermore, it also influences the future outlook of the unemployed by making it more negative, which hinders their well-being as shown by Creed and Klisch (2005).

The services also provided the unemployed with some of the lost latent benefits of work such as time structure, which is important especially for the people who suffer from alcohol abuse. Without these kinds of services they might easily go on a bender that could last for weeks, which was also brought up by some of those who were interviewed for this study. The importance of these latent benefits was

pointed out by Jahoda already in 1981, according to whom the loss of those benefits that people gained through employment, such as a time structure and broader social contacts, have a greater effect on the well-being of the unemployed (Creed and Klisch, 2005). Moreover, in places where the interviewees got to use their talents, participation became even more fulfilling. The same was also discovered by Sage (2017), who studied what kind of an influence the loss of employment had on the unemployed who had participated in active labour market programs in the Great Britain. Also in this case, the participants wanted to do something worthwhile during unemployment. In a situation where the participants resources have already been severely depleted and they also suffer from additional issues such as alcohol abuse, services that are more personalized and focus on what the person who is in rehabilitation wants are the most successful in enforcing the participants agency and relieving the feeling of loss caused by unemployment, as shown by Sage (2017). In addition to enforcing the agency of the unemployed, employment services should also provide the participants with some sort of compensation for their labour in order to avoid the feeling of being exploited.

7. Conclusions

This thesis was focused on finding out how the unemployed who attend Tampereen A-Kilta perceive the employment services that are provided for them, and how these services could be improved in their opinion. During this, the concept of agency was used as a theoretical framework, and the ways in which the employment services influence it regarding the unemployed. The data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with eight people who either worked at Tampereen A-Kilta or visited there regularly, and was analysed through content analysis.

The main findings were that the unemployed should have a say in their placement, since this enforces their agency as well as their satisfaction with the service, which further on influences their well-being. In addition to this, the need for continuity arose from the interviews, since this gives the participants hope and makes it possible for them to make future plans, which also affects their future outlook as well as well-being. This means that for example participation in a work try-out should improve the participants possibilities in getting into subsidized labour, which should further on help them in gaining permanent employment.

Although the services somewhat decreased the agency of the unemployed through forced participation, they also supported it especially in the case of people who had issues with alcohol abuse, since participating in the services prevented them from binge drinking and thus helped them control their drinking, specifically in places such as A-Kilta where participation under the influence of alcohol is prohibited and that also support sobriety in other ways.

This study was somewhat limited, since agency was selected as a theoretical framework only after the interviews had been conducted, so that the questions were not direct towards exploring it. Therefore, the results were left slightly superficial, and did not provide as an in-depth view into the agency of the unemployed as possible. In addition to this, the research material consisted of only eight interviews, because of which the dataset was somewhat limited. The interviews were also only conducted with the visitors or employees of A-Kilta, which means that the research scope is also quite narrow. Originally the plan was to recruit interviewees also from other places that provide services for the unemployed such as Silta-Valmennus and Legioonateatteri, but the initial appointments were cancelled due to the corona virus situation. Future research could hence be even more focused on the subject, in addition to centring more on how satisfied the unemployed are with the services that are provided for them, and how this in turn influences their well-being.

In addition to this, future policies that are aimed towards the activation of the unemployed should take into account the importance of voluntary participation, since this not only enforces the agency of the unemployed, but also makes participation more satisfactory, which furthermore influences the well-being of the unemployed. In addition to this, some sort of continuity should be provided for the participants, and especially for the youth as well as the long-term unemployed. For example, participation in a work try-out should increase the possibility of proceeding into subsidized labour, in addition to which the duration of both services should be lengthened, so that the participants can stay in one place longer than just a few months.

Furthermore, some sort of compensation is essential especially in work try-outs in order to avoid the feeling of exploitation, while motivation for participation could also be increased through extra benefits such as a free meal or a few additional euros on top of the regular unemployment benefits. The participants should not either have as heavy workload as those employees who are working on a salary. In addition to this, it is important that the participants have proper training and guidance at the workplace, since they are often only learning the job and should not be expected to do the same work as more experienced employees.

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