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Social workplaces in the public employment program: performance factors and methods for improvement

Abstract. Regulation of the level of employment through targeted programs is a current task of public administration, aimed at ensuring a sustainable social effect for the applicant in the form of employment. The purpose of the article is to identify objective and subjective factors influencing the final results of the project "Social workplaces". The research methodology is based on a sociological survey of 206 respondents one year after leaving the project. The results were processed by the method of structural modeling in the PLS-PM program. This method allows the evaluation of complex causal patterns with hidden variables that are significant but not observable. The results showed that the factors of an employee's competitiveness influence their current labor contract two times stronger than the factors of the project. There is correctly selected interdependence of events revealed that the passive motivation of the participant at the start changes if the trajectory of participation. and is achieved in a sustainable social effect.

Keywords: employment program, «Social workplaces» project, PLS-PM structural model, factors, final result, social effect.

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Introduction

The employment rate remains one of the main indicators of the country's socio-economic development, which characterizes the potential of the population to provide the desired standard of living. Regulation of the unemployment rate is one of the current tasks of strategic and operational state management which invites people into targeted programs and projects.

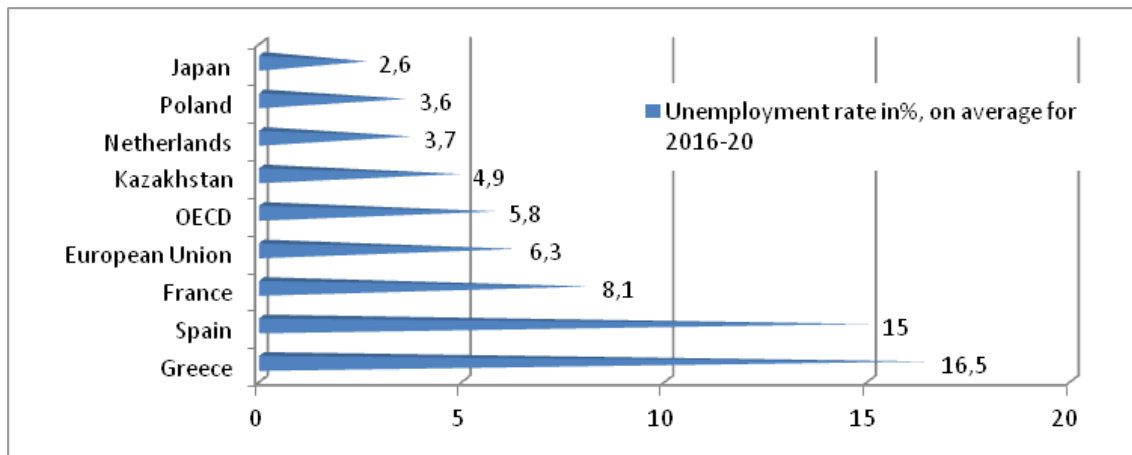
The instruments positioned as "Recruitment incentives" used within the framework of OECD countries target programs are temporary payments. They are aimed at helping recruit the

unemployed and other target groups for jobs where most of the labor expenses are covered by the employer. Over the past 15 years, these expenses in the aggregate gross domestic product of OECD countries have reached 0.07%. At the same time, in different countries the index may vary significantly: in Austria and Israel 0.04% each, Germany 0.05%, France 0.06%, Spain 0.12%, Italy 0.2% [1].

In accordance with the OECD the labor force coverage in this area reaches 1.23%. But again, there are significant differences between some countries such as Austria and Germany 0.4%, Israel 1.33%, France 1.6%, Italy 3.41%, Spain 5.8%.

Figure 1. The unemployment rate in the world, %

Note - compiled from the source [1,2]



The unemployment rate in Kazakhstan is lower than the OECD average index (Figure 1).

In Kazakhstan, the participation of job seekers in the state program of productive employment and mass entrepreneurship [3] called «Social workplaces» (hereinafter SWP) which is similar in content to the direction of «Recruitment incentives» has reached 0.22% of the total workforce for the period from 2017 to 2020. Expenses in this area are 0,35 -5 of GDP, much less than the OECD average.

The official assessment of the «Social workplaces» project in domestic practice is carried out only in terms of employment after participation in the SWP project. There is no assessed sustainability of the fact of employment in 1-1.5 years after leaving the project. In our opinion, sustainability is especially important in this project, because many of the project participants have difficulties with both professional training and social issues. A separate long-term subsidy program for workers with disabilities does not exist in Kazakhstan where the issue of sustainability of the result for these citizens is of particular importance.

Literature review

Subsidizing the recruitment of labor is a fairly traditional measure of state employment policy. It is used in conditions of economic crises, and structural restructuring of the economy and to

support social groups discriminated against by the labor market (for example, disabled people, citizens of pre-retirement age, etc.). This policy has been the subject of discussion for a long time among scientists and public administration practitioners since its application from the standpoint of economic efficiency raises doubts [4,5,6].

Many econometric evaluative studies that analyze specific programs differ in their results. There is no conclusive cross-country evidence to answer “which program refers to which target group and under what economic and institutional factors?”. In research [7] based on a meta-analysis of 137 program evaluations in 19 countries, it has been concluded that the results do not depend on economic crises and market conditions as much as on the content and tools of the program itself and the effectiveness of management in employment services. Moreover, other studies show that public employment services are ineffective as intermediaries when it comes to the employment of disadvantaged groups [8].

Politicians, managers, and researchers are focusing on innovative jobseeker service approaches that enable state agencies to stand out and improve their efficiency [9]. These effects are believed to be due to improved quality of service at the local level and greater flexibility in adapting services to individual clients [10, 11].

Evaluation in a number of studies claims that in a significant number of cases the social effect for the jobseeker ends when subsidizing is no longer provided [12,13]. That is why in some countries there is a so-called full coverage for workers with disabilities (wages and administrative costs), which provides ongoing support and does not have a planned duration.

However, the idea of social workplaces was developed for the so-called "disadvantaged" job seekers. These workplaces are created all over the world for workers with professional training limitations and social issues [14,15,16]. Other studies examine and recommend management tools for an employer who recruits former clients of social security programs [17]. At the same time, a number of studies emphasize that, in fact, the propensity of employers to participate in program projects is not rightly assessed and limits itself only to specific benefits [18].

In contrast to the discussion of stimulation recruitment for workers with difficulties in finding employment, there are many papers discussing the potential of network modes of public-private partnerships for public employment services (PES). van Gestel, Oomens, and Buwalda write about innovative and promising cases of public-private networks in employment services [19]. The authors show that under certain conditions vulnerable job seekers are better served by a network (government and non-government structures) involving employers than by a standard employer-government employment service-based approach. The lead role of innovator is assigned to employment services as government-funded services aimed at providing paid workplaces. [20]. In practice and in scientific discussions, there is a search for new organizational schemes of partnership networks [21,22].

When analyzing the activation tools used in labor market policy, it is recommended to take into account the leading driving force of employment: financial incentives or human capital [23].

Methodology

The relevance of the research lies in the identification of factors affecting the outcome of

the project "Social workplaces" both for project participants (the social effect assigned to them in the form of employment at a permanent place of work), and on the part of the external environment (employment center, workplace in the project), which allows us to identify a set of internal problems of the project. In the practice of labor market and employment state regulation such deep assessments are not carried out, which, in our opinion, is an omission.

The structural modeling method used by us (or a system of correlation-regression equations based on the results of a sociological survey) has never been used before when analyzing the results of projects in the state employment program. The effectiveness of employment programs is understood by us as a fact of employment, lasting at least one year. Within the framework of a single network construction the structural model makes it possible to compare the influence on the social effect not of each factor separately on the result, but a group of factors. We have assessed the influence of the system of indicators of the employee's competitiveness (number of specialties, total length of service, number of jobs) and characteristics of participants in the project (motivation, objective characteristics of the process, subjective assessment) on the final result. Based on the model, we also identified an interdependent sequence of events. The passive motivation of the participant at the start of the project can change if the trajectory of participation in the project is selected correctly, and ultimately expressed in a stable social effect. The revealed factors of influence and interrelationships make it possible to assess not only explicit but also hidden factors (motivation, assessment, behavior) on the final result of the project.

The purpose of the article is to identify objective and subjective factors influencing the final results of the «Social workplaces» project in order to develop recommendations for their improvement.

The research methodology is based on a sociological survey of graduates of the "Social Workplaces" project in 2018-2019 and 1-1,5 years after its completion. The sample included 206 people living in a large city (Karaganda), a small town (Saran), and a region (Abaysky region).

The survey results were processed by the statistical method of structural analysis in the PLS-PM computer program, which allows building of a structural model describing the relationship between the dependent variable Y and the independent variable X based on the partial least squares method. A structural model or system of regression equations estimates the relationship between the independent XN and the dependent variable Ym using multiple linear regression between the variables. The advantage of the model is the ability to assess the impact of the same number of factors XN on several dependent variables Ym, as well as the relationship between Ym within the framework of one construction.

The PLS-PM method allows us to assess complex models of causality with hidden variables that are significant but not observable

(for example, respondents' motivation, their assessment of events, respondent satisfaction with an event, etc.). The advantage of this model is the ability to use it on small sample sizes.

The method consists of two stages:

1) Model validation: a confirmatory factor analysis. This stage checks the relevance of the constructed model of regression equations to statistical criteria.

2) Testing the structural model: path analysis. At this stage, there are formed and tested a number of hypotheses that can be used within the framework of the model.

Discussion

The questionnaire included the following blocks and their constituent elements, which were assessed on a 5-point scale. (Table 1)

Table 1. The structure of the questionnaire and symbols in the PLS-PM model.

	Blocks	Designation	Block components	Designation
1	Current labor market situation	X1	Number of jobs during working life (all jobs with at least a month's experience)	1.1
			Number of specialties	1.2
			General work experience	1.3
2	Project participation parameters	X2	Motivation to participate in the project	2.1
			Job satisfaction in the project	2.2
			Duration of work in the project	2.3
3	Current place of work	Y1	Communication with the SWP project	3.1
			Information channel of employment	3.2
			A valid labor contract	3.3
4	Assessment of participation in the project	Y2	Experience value assessment for professional skills and competencies	4.1
			Assessment of the experience of participation in the project	4.2
			Assessment of the organization of the process in the Employment Center	4.3
5	Personal data	X3	Actual place of residence	5.1
			Year of graduation from the last institution of education	5.2
			Longest period of involuntary unemployment	5.3
			Special circumstances (social problems) that forced to go to SWP	5.4
* Compiled by the authors				

The general characteristics of a group of respondents based on the results of a structural analysis of the results of a sociological survey can be represented by the following statistics:

- 55% of participants had already had 4 or more jobs;
- 41% of participants at the time of entering the project had a total work experience up to 3 years, 34% from 3 to 10 years;
- 51% graduated from the last educational institution during 2015-2020, 46% in the period from 2000 to 2014;
- 27% of participants had the experience of forced unemployment for more than 6 months, and 26% for more than a year;
- 31% of participants have social problems that caused their participation in SWP (employee disability 7%, parents of a child with a disability - 2%, after a course of treatment for drug addiction / alcoholism - 20%, after leaving the penitentiary system - 2%);
- 26% a year after participating in the project at the time of the survey are unregistered

unemployed, 2.6% are self-employed, 71% are employees 7% of which work off the record;

- 70% live in a large city, 17% live in a small town, and 13% in the regional center.

This shows us that the modal social portrait of the participant is close to young age who graduated no later than 2000 but had already changed 4 or more jobs.

Based on the results of the sociological survey, the structural model was built in the PLS-PM computer program (Figure 2).

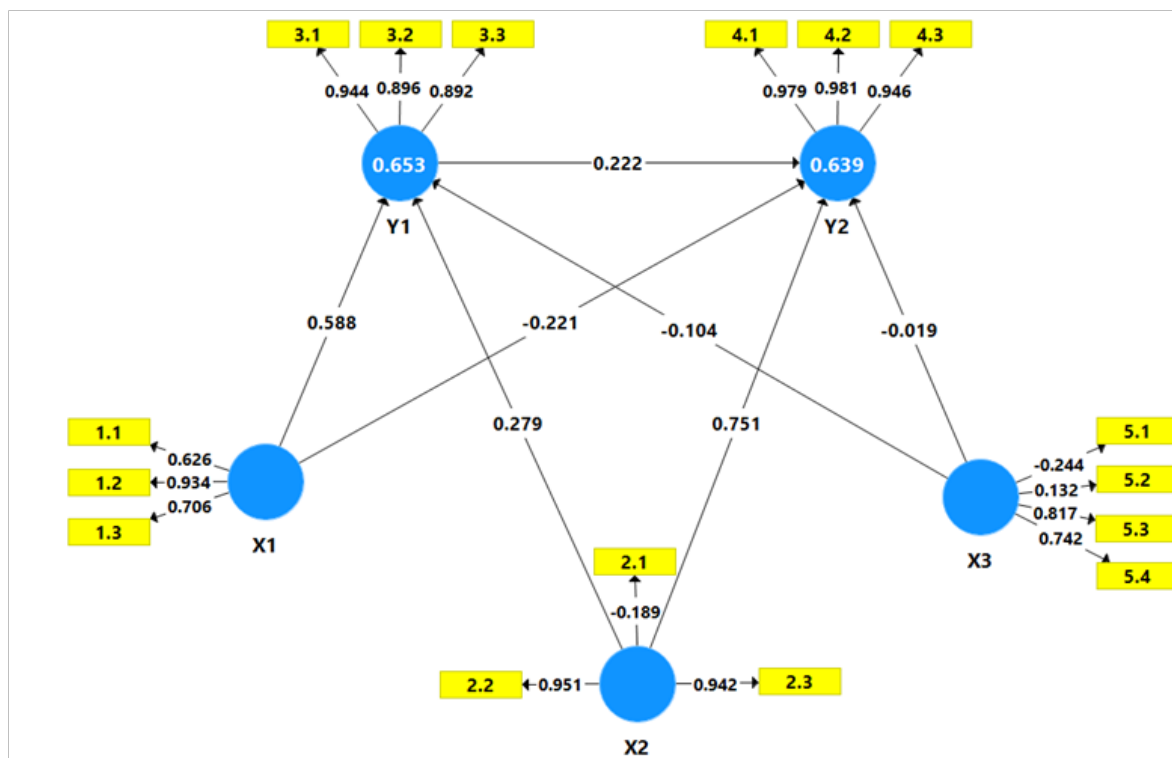
The process of evaluating the resulting model consists of two stages:

- 1) Model validation: confirmatory factor analysis
- 2) Testing the structural model: path analysis.

Stage 1. Confirmatory factor analysis quantitatively describes the data structure of the model.

1.1 Assessment of the consistency of questions within each of the five blocks, i.e. coefficients for variables X and Y (Table 2).

Figure 2. PLS-PM structural model



* Compiled by the authors

Table 2. Outer Loadings Matrix

	1.1	1.2	1.3	2.1	2.2	2.3	3.1	3.2	3.3	4.1	4.2	4.3	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.4
X1	0.626	0.934	0.706													
X2				-0.189	0.951	0.942										
X3													-0.244	0.132	0.817	0.742
Y1							0.944	0.896	0.892							
Y2										0.979	0.981	0.946				

Table 3. Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
X1	0.747	1.309	0.805	0.587
X2	0.600	0.823	0.712	0.609
X3	-0.020	0.417	0.436	0.324
Y1	0.898	0.909	0.936	0.830
Y2	0.967	0.969	0.979	0.938

Among 16 coefficients, 12 have a value greater than 0.7, which meets the requirements of the model. But 4 coefficients have less value due to the following features:

- X1.1 There is a slight shift in answers in favor of option 3 (3 jobs) over option 4 (four jobs), which does not change the direction of the general vector towards position 5.

- X 2.1 reflects the significant weight of the first answer option (26%) and the main specifics of the SWP project when the employer is interested in the workplace subsidizing and initiates an employee's appeal to the Employment Center in order to simulate unemployment and receive a referral to a social workplace project with appropriate subsidies.

- X5.1 and X5.2 reflect a high concentration of answers in one position. 5.1 - 70% of respondents live in a large city and 5.2 - 51% of respondents graduated in 2015-2020.

As 75% of the coefficients show the correctness of the given answer options, it is possible to proceed to the next steps of the assessment.

1.2 Examination of the internal consistency of the test questions in each block and measuring the effect of each question on the latent variable. This assessment is carried out using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (Table 3).

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient serves as a measure of the uniformity (internal consistency) of the indicator scores. The coefficient scale is: 0.6 - low; 0.7 - satisfactory; 0.8 - good; 0.9 - high.

Concerning four of the five variables in the model, Cronbach's Alpha is of sufficient magnitude to indicate acceptable fitness statistics.

To demonstrate the reliability of instruments, indicators - rho_A, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted are also calculated. The threshold for all three coefficients is 0.5.

CR is the Composite Reliability, which determines the overall reliability of the structure. The coefficient is calculated using the squared sum of the standardized factor loadings and the sum of error variance. The CR value ranges from 0 to 1. Approaching 1 means maximum reliability.

1.3 Checking collinearity.

Table 4 shows collinear statistics. Indicator VIF is used to detect multicollinearity. The maximum allowable value of this indicator is 5, and the minimum threshold is 0.2.

Table 4. Collinearity Statistics

	X1	X2	X3	Y1	Y2
X1				1.373	2.371
X2				1.334	1.558
X3				1.216	1.247
Y1					2.885

Collinear statistics are acceptable.

Stage 2. As all criteria are met, hypothesis testing is performed. Thus, there is carried out bootstrapping testing, which shows the statistical significance of the analysis results (Table 5).

Table 5. Bootstrapping test results

№		Original Sample (O)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
1	X1 -> Y1	0.588	7.287	0.000
2	X1 -> Y2	-0.221	2.051	0.041
3	X2 -> Y1	0.279	3.871	0.000
4	X2 -> Y2	0.751	9.140	0.000
5	X3 -> Y1	-0.104	1.042	0.298
6	X3 -> Y2	-0.019	0.155	0.877
7	Y1 -> Y2	0.222	2.043	0.042

Among seven hypotheses, five have been confirmed.

For variable Y1, two hypotheses have been confirmed.

Y1 (current place of work) is significantly influenced by the respondent's competitive position in the X1 labor market (number of places of work, total length of service, number of specialties). Hypothesis 1 "Position on the labor market -> current place of work" is confirmed with an ideal coefficient P Values = 0.000 (criterion is less than 0.05). The distribution frequency of Path Coefficients is shown in Figure 3.

Y1 is also influenced by X2 (motivation, job satisfaction in the project, duration of work in the project). Hypothesis 3 "Parameters of participation in the project -> current place of work" is confirmed.

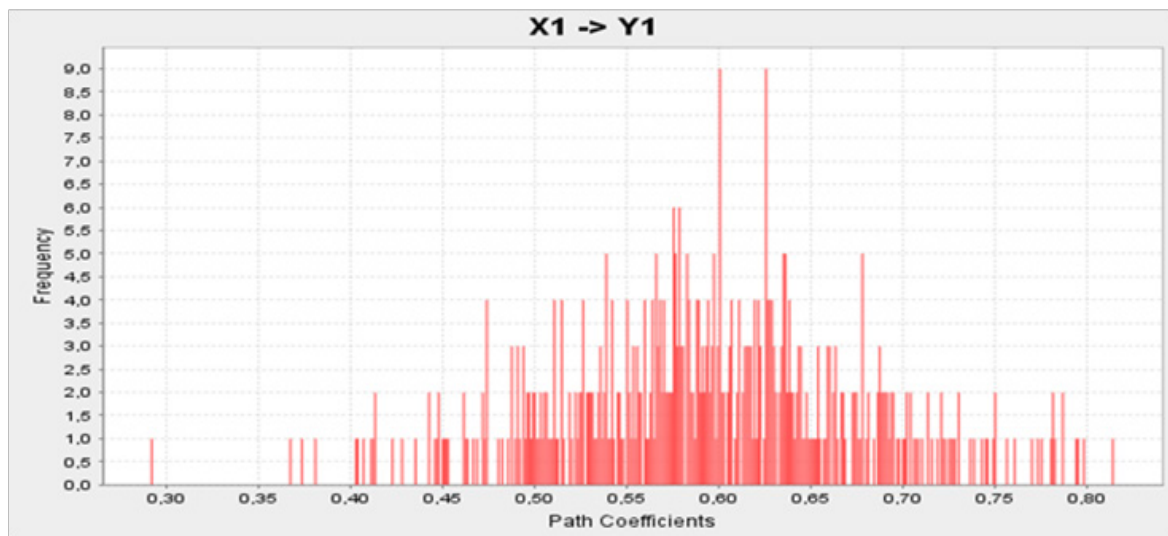
At the same time, it should be noted that the power of influence from X1 (0.588) is two times stronger than from X2 (0.279). This is due to the fact that 43.4% of the project participants noted that either officially (26.3%) or informally (17.1) they previously worked in the same workplace, which was subsidized as a project.

Three hypotheses are confirmed in regard to Y2.

The most obvious for explanation is the relatively weak (0.222), but statistically significant positive relationship between Y1 and Y2. Hypothesis 7 "Current place of work -> assessment of participation in the project" is confirmed. In fact, some employees (27.6%) note that there is a direct (25%) or indirect (2.36%) connection between the current place of work and participation in the project. While the amount of such workers is less than 1/3, then the connection is not manifested for everyone.

Despite the low access to actual employment among project participants in 1-1.5 years after the end of the project, many participants positively assess the process of participation in it. Even for the current unemployed people, it was a positive period in their life, self-realization, etc.

Figure 3. Frequency of Path Coefficients distribution for hypothesis 1



53% gave a positive and 21% gave rather positive assessment for the fact of participation in the project and the organization of services by the Employment Center. Therefore, hypothesis 4 "Parameters of participation in the project -> Assessment of participation in the project" or X2 -> Y2 is confirmed.

Hypothesis 2 "Position on the labor market -> Assessment of participation in the project" was confirmed with a low negative correlation coefficient equals to 0.221. In our opinion, this is a reflection of the fact that some of the employees with experience and several specialties did not need the project. Participation was initiated by an employer who received subsidies for workers' wages. Therefore, the higher the competitiveness of employees, the lower they value participation in the project; they simply do not notice it or cannot evaluate positively either the process or the result.

The connection between the independent X3 and dependent Y1, Y2 variables are not statistically significant, but have a negative sign, which reflects the fact that almost 50% of workers were not assigned any social effect from participation in the project. 23.7% worked as they did before, and 26.3% are currently unemployed.

Results

The results of our study are closely similar to the results of the assessment of the project "Organization of Social Places" carried out by one of the authors of the article in 2016 [24]. On the one hand, this indicates stable work of public services and the project results. On the other hand, the attraction of not applicants but their employers wanting financial benefits indicates "zero efficiency" of its effectiveness for a quarter of the participants.

We agree with the opinion [7] that the results of the project depend not so much on the level of development of the country and the economic cycle but on the content and management of the Employment Centers. Based on the assessment results of the SWP project we can see that public employment programs based on subsidized wages can be effective in increasing employment

probability. According to our estimates, one year after leaving the project 50% of participants have employment contracts in the same or another organization.

At the same time, we agree with the opinion [18] and note the fact that employers use state wage subsidy projects in their own interests. As a result, ineffective expenses appear in relation to every fourth participant who had an employment contract even without participating in the project.

We accept the fact that [8] employment services management is ineffective in relation to the employment of people with social issues. According to the results of our study, 64% of people with social issues remained without employment contracts a year later. Almost 20% of such participants come to the employment service projects more than once which brings up the question of the lack of an individual approach to such applicants with social issues. In this regard, we agree with the opinion [19, 20, 21] that networks with the participation of non-profit organizations and employers will be much more effective in terms of job selection for such workers.

Conclusion

Incentives for recruitment programs are used globally as a part of a wide range of measures to mitigate the impact on the labor market of economic restructuring, reduce unemployment in times of crisis, as well as to support categories of workers discriminated against by the labor market, such as those with disabilities. For the latter category, perpetual subsidies may apply.

The Kazakhstani project "Social workplaces" in the state employment program has a great implementation experience and considerable experience has been accumulated. A feature of the project is its target audience up to 31% of which are currently represented by applicants with social issues (disabled people, parents with disabled children, low-income citizens, etc.)

According to the results of this sociological research, this category of participants at the time of entering the project can be divided into two subgroups:

1) Working citizens (officially - 26.3%, informally - 17.1%);

2) Job seekers.

This determines the duality of the results of the project's analysis and evaluation.

The power of the impact on the current employment contract on the part of the employee's competitiveness (number of specialties, total length of service, and number of jobs) is twice stronger than on the part of the project. On one hand, 50% of graduates note that they are currently working (in the same organization where they had the project workplace or in another organization) but at the same time, 23.6% claim that nothing has changed in their work and 26.3% stay unemployed. Due to the fact that every fourth participant did not need the services of the project at all (unlike his employer), the influence of the project has weakened.

Only 27.5% of employees confirm that there is some connection (real or informational) between the real place of work and participation in the project, which undoubtedly affects the assessment of the project itself. There is a connection, but it is weak because exists only for 1/3 of employees.

A great connection between the parameters of participation in the project and its assessment is formed due to the fact that 74% of employees positively assess their experience and self-realization.

35.5% of participants point out their stay in the project for more than 1 year, which may have an

impact on the positive assessment of the project, but in each specific case, requires an analytical assessment to answer the question of how it is justified and whether these people are artificially involved in the project.

47.3% of the participants note that they did not acquire new professional skills and did not develop their qualifications during the period of their stay in the project. It is even more important that 51% of the project participants are young people who have graduated within the last six years.

The absence of a statistically significant connection between the personal data of a participant and his current place of work makes it possible to explain that the place of residence, year of graduation, and special social circumstances of the applicant do not play a significant role. The correctly chosen trajectory of participation in the project and an individual approach from the position of activating the applicant from the Employment Center make the difference.

For this purpose, it is necessary to apply the procedure for profiling an individual and select the best option for the applicant. It's important to take into account their abilities and capabilities in the context of a special demand in the labor market. The network structures intensification with the non-state participants in the labor market infrastructure (NPOs, private businesses, private employment agencies) will increase the social effect for the job seeker.

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Мемлекеттік жұмыспен қамту бағдарламасындағы әлеуметтік жұмыс орындары: тиімділік факторлары мен жақсарту әдістері

Аннотация. Нысаналы бағдарламалар арқылы жұмыспен қамту деңгейін реттеу мемлекеттік басқарудың кезек күттірмейтін міндеті болып табылады, ол өтініш берушіге жұмыспен қамту түріндегі тұрақты әлеуметтік әсерді қамтамасыз ету болып табылады. Мақаланың мақсаты оларды жақсарту бойынша ұсыныстар әзірлеу үшін жобаның соңғы нәтижелеріне әсер ететін объективті және субъективті факторларды анықтау. Зерттеу әдістемесі жобадан шыққаннан кейін бір жыл ішінде 206 респонденттің әлеуметтік сауалнамасына негізделген. Сауалнама нәтижелері PLS-PM бағдарламасында өңделген. Әдіс мәнді, бірақ байқалмайтын жасырын айнымалылармен себепті байланыстардың күрделі үлгілерін бағалауға мүмкіндік береді. Нәтижелер жұмыскердің ағымдағы еңбек шартына оның бәсекеге қабілеттілігі факторларының тобының әсер ету күші жоба факторларынан екі есе күшті екенін көрсетті. Оқиғалардың өзара тәуелділігі анықталды: егер қатысу траекториясы дұрыс таңдалса және тұрақты әлеуметтік әсерде көрінсе, бастапқыда қатысушының пассивті мотивациясы өзгереді.

Түйін сөздер: жұмыспен қамту бағдарламасы, Әлеуметтік жұмыс орындары жобасы, PLS-PM құрылымдық моделі, факторлар, соңғы нәтиже, әлеуметтік әсер

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Социальные рабочие места в государственной программе занятости: факторы результативности и методы улучшения

Аннотация. Регулирование уровня занятости через целевые программы является актуальной задачей государственного управления, которая заключается в обеспечении для соискателя устойчивого социального эффекта в форме трудоустройства. Цель статьи - выявить объективные и субъективные факторы, оказывающие влияние на конечные результаты проекта «Социальные рабочие места» в программе занятости для разработки рекомендаций по их улучшению. Методология исследования базируется на социологическом опросе: 206 респондентов через год после выхода из проекта. Результаты обработаны методом структурного моделирования в компьютерной программе PLS-PM. Метод позволяет оценивать сложные модели причинно-следственных связей со скрытыми переменными, которые значимы, но не наблюдаемы. Результаты показали, что сила влияния на действующий трудовой контракт работника со стороны группы факторов его конкурентоспособности в два раза сильнее, чем факторов проекта. Выявлена взаимообусловленность событий: пассивная мотивация участника на старте меняется, если траектория участия подобрана правильно, и выражается в устойчивом социальном эффекте.

Ключевые слова: программа занятости, проект «Социальные рабочие места», структурная модель PLS-PM, факторы, конечный результат, социальный эффект.

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