Dimensions of Coping in Individuals Facing Long-Term Unemployment

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to explore and categorize the dimensions of coping strategies employed by individuals facing long-term unemployment in Morocco. **Methods and Materials:** A qualitative research design was adopted, utilizing a phenomenological approach to capture the lived experiences of participants. Twenty-seven individuals (14 males, 13 females), aged between 23 and 54 years, who had been unemployed for a minimum of 18 consecutive months, were purposively sampled from both urban and rural regions of Morocco. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured, in-depth interviews, either face-to-face or via secure online platforms, depending on participants' preferences. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis in NVivo 14 software, following an inductive coding process to identify categories, subcategories, and concepts. **Findings:** Analysis revealed four main dimensions of coping: emotional coping strategies, social and relational coping, cognitive and problem-focused coping, and behavioral and lifestyle adaptations. Emotional coping encompassed subthemes such as emotional regulation, positive reframing, suppression of negative emotions, acceptance, and hope maintenance. Social and relational coping included family support, peer networks, community engagement, reduced social interaction, online social support, and mentorship seeking. Cognitive and problem-focused coping involved skill development, goal setting, job search strategies, financial planning, information seeking, self-monitoring, and creative problem-solving. Behavioral and lifestyle adaptations comprised routine maintenance, health-oriented activities, leisure and hobbies, religious and spiritual practices, relocation or migration planning, temporary or gig work, and minimalist living. **Conclusion:** Effective support interventions should integrate skill-building, emotional well-being enhancement, and community-based resources to address both the immediate and long-term needs of unemployed individuals.
Keywords: Long-term unemployment; coping strategies; social support

1. Introduction

Long-term unemployment remains a persistent socio-economic challenge with far-reaching implications for individuals' psychological, emotional, and social well-being. Defined as being out of work for an extended period—often exceeding twelve months—this condition not only reduces financial security but also undermines self-worth, social inclusion, and life satisfaction. While the economic consequences are widely acknowledged, the personal and relational dimensions of coping with sustained unemployment require deeper examination, especially in diverse cultural contexts. The ways in which individuals manage prolonged joblessness are shaped by an intricate interplay of psychological resources, social support systems, and adaptive behaviors (Matochová, 2025; Park, 2025). In many societies, unemployment is imbued with social stigma, further compounding the distress experienced by those affected and influencing the coping strategies they employ (Deocades et al., 2025; Wu et al., 2024).

Research on well-being among different population groups highlights that coping with adversity is rarely an isolated process but is embedded in social and cultural contexts. University students, for example, have been shown to rely heavily on familial and peer support when adjusting to life transitions, illustrating the universal value of relational resources in coping (Vaidya et al., 2024; Widiyastuti & Hardita, 2024). In the context of long-term unemployment, similar support structures—family, friends, community, and online networks—can act as buffers against emotional distress, fostering resilience and promoting mental health (Anda et al., 2025; Kaur & Sharma, 2023). Such support not only provides practical assistance but also affirms individuals' sense of belonging, countering the isolation that often accompanies prolonged joblessness (Awan et al., 2025; Bersia et al., 2024).

A significant body of literature suggests that social support is strongly linked to psychological well-being, with its absence correlating with increased stress, depression, and maladaptive coping (Mpofu & Patil, 2025; Shamsuddin et al., 2024). Theories of coping propose that individuals draw upon both problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies to navigate challenging situations (Damayanti, 2025; Ye et al., 2023). In unemployment contexts, problem-focused strategies may involve active job searching, skill development, and financial planning, while emotion-focused strategies can include reframing the situation, engaging in religious or spiritual practices, and seeking emotional comfort from others (Mohaiyuddin et al., 2024; Penrattanahiran, 2023). These strategies are not mutually exclusive and often overlap, reflecting the complexity of human adaptation in the face of enduring challenges (Kachroo & Ramanathan, 2023; katoch & Lone, 2024).

Global studies have also shown that the perceived adequacy of social support influences how individuals evaluate and respond to adverse life events. For example, evidence from cross-cultural research on university student populations demonstrates that individuals who feel supported report higher levels of subjective well-being and life satisfaction (Beri & Thakur, 2024; Yuan et al., 2024). While these findings emerge from educational contexts, their implications extend to other high-stress situations such as long-term unemployment. In such circumstances, support systems can validate personal experiences, offer hope, and provide a practical safety net, all of which can significantly shape coping processes (Abarientos et al., 2025; Wu et al., 2024).

Coping with long-term unemployment is further complicated by the interplay between individual agency and structural constraints. Structural factors—such as labor market conditions, government policies, and social safety nets—define the opportunities available for re-employment, while individual-level factors, including resilience, emotional regulation, and self-esteem, determine how people respond to these opportunities (Anda et al., 2025; Matochová, 2025). For instance, research has found that higher self-esteem mediates the positive effects of social support on psychological well-being (Damayanti, 2025; Yuan et al., 2024), suggesting that internal psychological resources can enhance the benefits derived from external support.

Cultural norms and expectations also play a pivotal role in shaping coping behaviors. In collectivist societies, where group cohesion and interdependence are valued, individuals may be more inclined to seek familial and community assistance, whereas in individualist cultures, there may be greater emphasis on self-reliance and personal initiative (Mohaiyuddin et al., 2024; Mpofu & Patil, 2025). Cross-national studies on well-being among young adults underscore the need to understand coping within its cultural context (Awan et al., 2025; Bersia et al., 2024). These studies suggest that culturally congruent coping strategies—such as reliance on extended family networks in some cultures or engagement in peer support groups in others—can significantly influence outcomes in unemployment

adaptation (Penrattanahiran, 2023; Widiyastuti & Hardita, 2024).

Psychosocial stressors associated with long-term unemployment can mirror the adjustment problems documented in other transitional life phases, such as the move from secondary to higher education (Abarientos et al., 2025; Deocades et al., 2025). In both cases, individuals may experience dislocation from familiar routines, loss of social roles, and uncertainty about the future, all of which necessitate the development of new coping strategies (Kaur & Sharma, 2023; Ye et al., 2023). Studies focusing on homesickness and emotional distress among populations living away from their home environments offer relevant parallels, particularly regarding the role of perceived safety, belonging, and community engagement (Awan et al., 2025; katoch & Lone, 2024).

Another important dimension in understanding coping with long-term unemployment is the role of meaning-making and purpose. Research among university students has shown that engagement in purposeful activities—such as volunteering, religious participation, or skill-based projects—can mitigate feelings of helplessness and foster a sense of agency (Mohaiyuddin et al., 2024; Vaidya et al., 2024). In unemployment contexts, such activities can help individuals maintain structured daily routines and preserve a sense of contribution to society, thereby supporting mental health (Shamsuddin et al., 2024; Wu et al., 2024).

Studies examining the relationship between interpersonal support and well-being have consistently highlighted the protective role of strong social connections (Kaur & Sharma, 2023; Matochová, 2025). In the absence of such support, individuals facing long-term unemployment are at increased risk of social withdrawal, loss of confidence, and adoption of maladaptive coping mechanisms. Conversely, when meaningful relationships are maintained, individuals are more likely to engage in proactive behaviors that enhance re-employment prospects (Anda et al., 2025; Bersia et al., 2024).

The literature also indicates that coping strategies are not static; rather, they evolve over time in response to changing personal circumstances and external conditions (Park, 2025; Ye et al., 2023). For example, individuals may initially focus on active job searching and skill development but gradually shift toward emotional regulation and acceptance if re-employment opportunities remain scarce. Understanding these temporal patterns is essential for designing effective interventions that address both the immediate and long-term

needs of unemployed populations (Mpofu & Patil, 2025; Penrattanahiran, 2023).

Furthermore, insights from studies on adjustment and well-being in educational transitions emphasize the need for integrated approaches to coping that combine emotional, cognitive, and behavioral components (Damayanti, 2025; Deocades et al., 2025). In practice, this means interventions should not only focus on improving job search skills but also on strengthening psychological resilience, enhancing self-esteem, and building supportive networks (Abarientos et al., 2025; Beri & Thakur, 2024).

The present study seeks to build on these insights by exploring the dimensions of coping among individuals facing long-term unemployment in Morocco.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study employed a qualitative research design aimed at exploring and identifying the dimensions of coping in individuals experiencing long-term unemployment. A phenomenological approach was chosen to capture the lived experiences of participants and to provide a deep understanding of the strategies, attitudes, and adaptive mechanisms they use in response to their prolonged joblessness.

The participants comprised 27 individuals residing in various urban and rural regions of Morocco who had been unemployed for a minimum period of 18 consecutive months. Purposeful sampling was utilized to ensure that participants possessed relevant firsthand experiences with long-term unemployment and could provide rich, descriptive accounts of their coping processes. Inclusion criteria included being over the age of 21, having the cognitive ability to participate in interviews, and providing informed consent. Diversity in gender, age, educational background, and previous occupational sectors was sought to capture a wide range of coping experiences. Recruitment was facilitated through local employment agencies, community organizations, and social networks. Participation continued until theoretical saturation was reached, meaning that no new themes or dimensions emerged from the data.

2.2. Measures

Data collection relied exclusively on semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted face-to-face or via secure video conferencing platforms, depending on participants'

availability and preference. An interview guide was developed based on relevant literature and preliminary discussions with career counselors, covering areas such as emotional reactions to unemployment, social support systems, financial adaptation strategies, and psychological resilience. Interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes, were conducted in Moroccan Arabic or French depending on participant preference, and were audio-recorded with permission. Field notes were also taken to capture non-verbal cues and contextual details.

2.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis followed a thematic analysis approach using NVivo 14 software. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and, where necessary, translated into English for coding purposes while retaining original linguistic nuances. An inductive coding process was applied, beginning with open coding to identify initial concepts, followed by axial coding to establish relationships between codes, and selective coding to integrate categories into overarching themes. Coding consistency and credibility were enhanced through peer debriefing among the research team and iterative refinement of the coding framework. Reflexivity was maintained throughout the analysis process, with the researchers documenting their assumptions and perspectives to minimize bias.

3. Findings and Results

The study sample comprised 27 participants from various regions of Morocco, including both urban centers such as Casablanca, Rabat, and Marrakech, and rural communities in the provinces of Souss-Massa and Fès-Meknès. Participants ranged in age from 23 to 54 years, with a mean age of 36.4 years. Fourteen participants (51.9%) were male and thirteen (48.1%) were female. Regarding educational attainment, 9 participants (33.3%) had completed secondary school, 11 (40.7%) held a bachelor's degree, and 7 (25.9%) had attained postgraduate qualifications. The duration of unemployment varied from 18 months to 8 years, with 15 participants (55.6%) experiencing unemployment for between 18 months and 3 years, 8 participants (29.6%) between 3 and 5 years, and 4 participants (14.8%) for more than 5 years. Prior to job loss, participants' occupational backgrounds were diverse, including administrative roles (n = 7, 25.9%), skilled trades (n = 6, 22.2%), education (n = 5, 18.5%), sales and retail (n = 5, 18.5%), and hospitality services (n = 4, 14.8%).

Table 1

Themes, Subthemes, and Concepts of Coping in Individuals Facing Long-Term Unemployment

Category (Theme)	Subcategory	Concepts (Open Codes)
1. Emotional Coping Strategies	Emotional Regulation	Practicing mindfulness; Journaling emotions; Engaging in relaxation techniques; Deep breathing exercises
	Positive Reframing	Looking for lessons in hardship; Viewing unemployment as temporary; Focusing on personal growth; Reassessing life priorities
	Suppression of Negative Emotions	Avoiding discussions about unemployment; Concealing distress from family; Distracting oneself with activities
	Acceptance	Acknowledging the situation; Reducing resistance to change; Letting go of unrealistic expectations
	Hope Maintenance	Visualizing future employment; Keeping a "hope diary"; Celebrating small achievements
2. Social and Relational Coping	Family Support	Seeking advice from relatives; Sharing responsibilities; Receiving financial help; Emotional encouragement
	Peer Networks	Meeting with unemployed peers; Sharing job leads; Participating in community discussions
	Community Engagement	Volunteering in local projects; Participating in religious gatherings; Attending skill-building events
	Reduced Social Interaction	Withdrawing from gatherings; Limiting social media use; Avoiding acquaintances to escape stigma
	Online Social Support	Joining online unemployment forums; Using social media for encouragement; Building digital friendships
	Mentorship Seeking	Finding role models; Consulting career coaches; Seeking guidance from experienced professionals
3. Cognitive and Problem-Focused Coping	Skill Development	Enrolling in online courses; Learning a new trade; Improving language skills; Attending workshops
	Goal Setting	Breaking tasks into steps; Setting realistic job search targets; Keeping a daily to-do list

	Job Search Strategies	Using employment agencies; Networking with former colleagues; Sending unsolicited applications; Following up on leads
	Financial Planning	Creating a strict budget; Cutting unnecessary expenses; Prioritizing essential spending
	Information Seeking	Researching labor market trends; Studying employer expectations; Learning about government support programs
	Self-Monitoring	Tracking job applications; Evaluating progress; Adjusting strategies based on feedback
	Creative Problem-Solving	Identifying alternative income sources; Exploring remote work; Starting micro-enterprises
4. Behavioral and Lifestyle Adaptations	Routine Maintenance	Keeping a daily schedule; Morning exercise; Designated work-search hours
	Health-Oriented Activities	Regular walking; Balanced diet; Reducing caffeine; Practicing yoga
	Leisure and Hobbies	Painting; Gardening; Playing musical instruments; Reading
	Religious and Spiritual Practices	Daily prayers; Reading religious texts; Participating in fasting periods; Attending spiritual lectures
	Relocation or Migration Planning	Considering moving for job opportunities; Contacting relatives abroad; Exploring rural employment options
	Temporary or Gig Work	Freelancing; Short-term manual labor; Seasonal jobs; Online micro-tasks
	Minimalist Living	Downsizing possessions; Sharing housing; Reducing luxury consumption

Emotional Coping Strategies emerged as a central theme, reflecting how participants managed their internal emotional responses to prolonged joblessness. Within this category, *Emotional Regulation* was a recurrent subtheme, with participants describing deliberate efforts to maintain emotional stability. Techniques such as mindfulness, journaling, and deep breathing exercises were used to reduce anxiety. As one participant noted, *"When I feel overwhelmed, I close my eyes, breathe slowly, and remind myself that I am more than my unemployment"* (P4).

The subtheme of *Positive Reframing* involved reinterpreting the situation in ways that promoted resilience. Participants often viewed unemployment as a temporary setback and an opportunity for personal growth. P9 shared, *"I tell myself this is just a chapter, not the whole story. Maybe I needed this pause to rethink my career path."* This cognitive shift helped sustain optimism despite ongoing challenges.

For some, *Suppression of Negative Emotions* was a preferred coping style, where distress was intentionally concealed from others. This often meant avoiding conversations about job loss or distracting oneself with hobbies. *"I never tell my family when I'm feeling down. I prefer to keep it inside and focus on something else"* (P16) reflected the desire to protect loved ones and maintain dignity.

The subtheme of *Acceptance* involved recognizing the reality of the situation and letting go of unrealistic expectations. Acceptance did not mean resignation but rather an emotional readiness to adapt. As P22 expressed, *"I stopped fighting the fact that I'm unemployed. Instead, I started thinking about what I can actually do with my time now."*

Finally, *Hope Maintenance* was evident in the way participants nurtured belief in future employment. Visualization exercises, small achievements, and symbolic reminders were common. P3 described, *"I keep a notebook where I write one thing every day that brings me closer to my future job, even if it's just updating my résumé."*

Social and Relational Coping highlighted the role of interpersonal connections in sustaining well-being. *Family Support* was crucial, with many participants receiving financial help, emotional encouragement, and practical advice. P7 explained, *"My brothers chip in for my rent, and my mother calls me every morning to tell me not to lose hope."*

The subtheme of *Peer Networks* showed that sharing experiences with others in similar situations created a sense of solidarity. *"Talking to other unemployed friends makes me feel less alone. We exchange tips, and sometimes we laugh about our struggles"* (P13) illustrated this mutual support.

Community Engagement provided a sense of purpose and belonging. Participants described volunteering, attending skill-building events, and joining religious gatherings. As P11 stated, *"When I volunteer at the youth center, I forget my own problems and feel useful again."*

Conversely, *Reduced Social Interaction* emerged for some, who withdrew from gatherings to avoid stigma. P19 admitted, *"I stopped going to weddings or big events because everyone keeps asking, 'Have you found a job yet?' and I have no answer."*

In contrast, *Online Social Support* offered an anonymous yet comforting space to connect. Many joined unemployment forums or used social media for encouragement. P5 shared, *"In the Facebook group, people*

understand without judging. We even celebrate when someone gets hired."

Lastly, *Mentorship Seeking* reflected a proactive approach to learning from others' experiences. P24 noted, *"I found a retired engineer who guides me on improving my CV and preparing for interviews. His advice is gold."*

Cognitive and Problem-Focused Coping emphasized strategies aimed at practical solutions. *Skill Development* was common, with participants enrolling in online courses or learning trades. P14 said, *"I started an online French class to improve my chances with multinational companies."*

The subtheme of *Goal Setting* involved creating structured plans. As P2 described, *"Every week, I set three job-related goals—like applying to five positions or updating my LinkedIn profile."*

Job Search Strategies were diverse, ranging from using employment agencies to cold emailing companies. P21 shared, *"I contact people I used to work with, even if it's been years. Sometimes they know of openings."*

Financial Planning helped participants cope with reduced income. This included budgeting and cutting expenses. P18 explained, *"I started tracking every dirham I spend. It's tough, but it keeps me from going into debt."*

In *Information Seeking*, participants actively researched market trends and employer needs. P25 remarked, *"I read job reports and government updates to know which sectors are hiring."*

Self-Monitoring ensured accountability, as P6 noted, *"I keep a spreadsheet of all my applications and responses. It helps me see progress."*

Lastly, *Creative Problem-Solving* involved alternative income ideas. P1 said, *"I started selling homemade crafts online. It's not much, but it keeps me busy and brings in a little money."*

Behavioral and Lifestyle Adaptations addressed tangible changes in daily routines. *Routine Maintenance* was central to preserving structure. P8 described, *"I wake up at the same time every day and dedicate mornings to job searching."*

Health-Oriented Activities included exercise, diet adjustments, and yoga. P12 explained, *"Morning walks clear my head and give me energy to keep searching."*

Leisure and Hobbies provided emotional relief, with activities like painting or gardening. P17 shared, *"I lose track of time when I'm painting. It's my therapy."*

Religious and Spiritual Practices offered comfort and meaning. As P20 noted, *"Prayer keeps me grounded and hopeful, even on hard days."*

Relocation or Migration Planning was considered by those seeking broader opportunities. P15 explained, *"I've been talking to my cousin in Spain about possible work there."*

Temporary or Gig Work gave some financial relief. P23 said, *"I take seasonal farm jobs. It's not ideal, but it helps me survive."*

Lastly, *Minimalist Living* reduced financial pressure. P10 remarked, *"I sold my car and moved into a smaller apartment. It's less stressful now."*

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed four broad dimensions of coping among individuals facing long-term unemployment: emotional coping strategies, social and relational coping, cognitive and problem-focused coping, and behavioral and lifestyle adaptations. These categories encompassed a diverse set of subthemes, illustrating that coping is a multidimensional and dynamic process. Participants engaged in both problem-focused strategies, such as skill development, job search planning, and financial budgeting, and emotion-focused strategies, such as positive reframing, hope maintenance, and religious practices. The diversity in coping responses reflects the complexity of adapting to sustained joblessness and supports the view that coping involves a flexible interplay between personal resources, social connections, and contextual constraints (Matochová, 2025; Park, 2025).

The prominence of emotional coping strategies in participants' narratives aligns with prior research that underscores the psychological toll of long-term unemployment and the necessity of maintaining emotional equilibrium (Anda et al., 2025; Wu et al., 2024). Techniques such as mindfulness, journaling, and cognitive reframing observed in this study resonate with findings from higher education contexts, where emotional regulation has been linked to improved well-being and resilience (Beri & Thakur, 2024; Vaidya et al., 2024). Positive reframing, in particular, was a notable theme in our results, as participants often viewed unemployment as a temporary phase or an opportunity for self-growth. This is consistent with evidence showing that reappraising adverse situations fosters optimism and protects against mental distress (Bersia et al., 2024; Kaur & Sharma, 2023).

The role of hope maintenance, expressed through visualizing future employment and celebrating small achievements, parallels findings in studies on life transitions,

where maintaining goal-oriented optimism has been associated with greater perseverance in the face of adversity (Abarientos et al., 2025; Penrattanahiran, 2023). In collectivist cultural settings, such as Morocco, these strategies may be particularly effective because hope is often reinforced through collective narratives of endurance and success, shared within families and communities (Mohaiyuddin et al., 2024; Mpofu & Patil, 2025).

Social and relational coping emerged as another major theme, reflecting the critical role of interpersonal networks in mitigating the negative impacts of unemployment. Family support—both emotional and material—was described as essential to participants' coping capacity. This finding is consistent with the literature emphasizing the buffering effect of familial support on psychological distress (Damayanti, 2025; Widiyastuti & Hardita, 2024). Peer networks also played a role, with unemployed individuals exchanging job leads, sharing experiences, and offering mutual encouragement, mirroring patterns identified in peer-support studies among students living away from home (Awan et al., 2025; katoch & Lone, 2024).

Interestingly, while some participants reported increased community engagement as a coping method, others described reducing social interactions to avoid stigma. This dual pattern reflects the ambivalence surrounding social exposure during prolonged unemployment, where maintaining connections can foster inclusion but also expose individuals to judgment or pity (Shamsuddin et al., 2024; Ye et al., 2023). The finding that online social support provided a safer, judgment-free environment aligns with research on digital peer networks as spaces for sharing experiences and receiving encouragement (Deocades et al., 2025; Yuan et al., 2024). Mentorship-seeking behaviors, noted among several participants, also echo earlier findings that guidance from experienced individuals can improve job search strategies and enhance self-efficacy (Kachroo & Ramanathan, 2023; Matochová, 2025).

Cognitive and problem-focused coping strategies reflected participants' proactive efforts to improve their employment prospects. Skill development was a key strategy, often involving online courses, language training, or trade learning. These actions parallel findings from studies where individuals engaged in upskilling during transitional periods reported greater re-employment success and improved self-esteem (Vaidya et al., 2024; Wu et al., 2024). Goal setting, another recurrent theme, was consistent with literature on structured coping approaches, which suggests that breaking large objectives into smaller,

achievable tasks enhances motivation and perceived control (Anda et al., 2025; Penrattanahiran, 2023).

Job search strategies described by participants—such as networking, cold applications, and leveraging past professional contacts—echo established re-employment practices that have been linked to higher success rates in labor market reintegration (Beri & Thakur, 2024; Ye et al., 2023). Financial planning was also prominent, with participants prioritizing essential expenses and cutting unnecessary costs, which reflects previous studies showing that financial literacy and management skills contribute to psychological stability during unemployment (Abarientos et al., 2025; Kaur & Sharma, 2023). Creative problem-solving, such as starting small home-based enterprises or engaging in freelance work, aligns with adaptive strategies identified in research on income diversification in response to economic hardship (Matochová, 2025; Mpofu & Patil, 2025).

Behavioral and lifestyle adaptations were equally significant, demonstrating that coping extended beyond cognitive strategies into tangible daily practices. Routine maintenance helped participants maintain structure and purpose, supporting earlier findings that regular schedules contribute to emotional stability and reduce the sense of aimlessness associated with unemployment (Park, 2025; Widiyastuti & Hardita, 2024). Health-oriented activities such as walking, yoga, and dietary adjustments were consistent with studies linking physical activity to improved mental well-being (Bersia et al., 2024; Damayanti, 2025).

Leisure and hobbies served as restorative activities, offering distraction and emotional fulfillment, paralleling previous research on the therapeutic value of creative pursuits in stressful contexts (Awan et al., 2025; Vaidya et al., 2024). Religious and spiritual practices provided comfort, meaning, and resilience, reflecting similar findings in studies on the role of spirituality in coping with life challenges (Kachroo & Ramanathan, 2023; Mohaiyuddin et al., 2024). Relocation or migration planning, although less common, illustrated the willingness of some participants to consider geographical mobility as a long-term coping strategy, resonating with literature on migration as a means of economic adaptation (Ye et al., 2023; Yuan et al., 2024). Temporary or gig work, alongside minimalist living approaches, showed pragmatic adaptation to financial constraints, supporting earlier evidence that flexibility in income sources can alleviate economic stress during extended unemployment (Matochová, 2025; Shamsuddin et al., 2024).

Overall, the findings of this study reinforce the understanding that coping with long-term unemployment is an evolving and context-dependent process. The coexistence of problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidance-oriented strategies mirrors patterns observed in other transitional life phases, such as adjusting to higher education or living away from home (Abarientos et al., 2025; Deocades et al., 2025). Importantly, the interplay between social support and internal coping mechanisms emerged as a critical determinant of adaptation. Participants who reported stronger relational ties, mentorship access, and community belonging appeared better able to sustain active coping efforts, a finding consistent with the social buffering hypothesis (Beri & Thakur, 2024; Wu et al., 2024).

Moreover, this study's results align with cross-cultural research indicating that coping strategies are shaped by both individual personality traits and cultural norms (Mohaiyuddin et al., 2024; Mpofu & Patil, 2025). In Moroccan society, the collectivist orientation emphasizes interdependence, which may explain the prevalence of family and community-based coping approaches observed here. This cultural lens is critical in interpreting the findings, as strategies effective in one cultural context may not have the same impact in another (katoch & Lone, 2024; Widiyastuti & Hardita, 2024).

By highlighting the complexity and variability of coping responses to long-term unemployment, this study contributes to a nuanced understanding of adaptation in economically adverse contexts. The identified themes not only corroborate existing literature but also extend it by illustrating how these strategies manifest in a North African cultural setting. This contextual specificity is valuable for informing policy and program design aimed at supporting unemployed individuals through both immediate interventions and long-term capacity building (Matochová, 2025; Park, 2025).

5.   Limitations & Suggestions

This study, while offering rich qualitative insights, is limited in its generalizability due to its sample size and purposive sampling strategy. The 27 participants were drawn exclusively from Morocco, which means the cultural, economic, and policy contexts influencing their coping strategies may not reflect those in other regions. Additionally, self-reported data from interviews may be subject to recall bias or social desirability bias, potentially influencing the authenticity of some narratives. The cross-sectional design captures coping at a single point in time and does not account for how strategies may evolve over the course of unemployment. Finally, the reliance on online and in-person interviews without triangulation from observational or longitudinal data limits the ability to fully validate participants' reported behaviors.

Future studies could expand the sample to include a more diverse range of socio-economic and cultural contexts, allowing for cross-country comparisons of coping strategies. Longitudinal designs would provide deeper insight into the temporal evolution of coping behaviors and the factors that influence shifts from problem-focused to emotion-focused strategies over time. Integrating quantitative measures of psychological well-being, financial stability, and social support could enhance the robustness of findings and allow for statistical correlations between coping dimensions and well-being outcomes. Further, research exploring gender-specific coping differences and the role of digital communities in unemployment adaptation could yield valuable practical and theoretical contributions.

Practitioners and policymakers should consider developing multi-component intervention programs that combine skill-building, mental health support, and social networking opportunities for unemployed individuals. Community organizations can play a pivotal role in fostering peer support groups, mentorship programs, and safe online platforms for sharing experiences. Career counseling services should incorporate training in both problem-focused strategies, such as targeted job search planning, and emotion-focused approaches, including mindfulness and resilience training. Additionally, public awareness campaigns can help reduce stigma surrounding unemployment, thereby encouraging more open discussion and help-seeking among affected individuals.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this article.

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