

Dimensions of Coping in Individuals Facing Long-Term Unemployment: A Qualitative Exploration

Zosia. Zielińska¹, William. Harrison^{2*}, Ivana. Radić³

¹ Department of Health Psychology, Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland

² Department of Behavioral Neuroscience, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, USA

³ Department of Developmental Psychology, University of Zagreb, Zagreb, Croatia

* Corresponding author email address: w.harrison@utexas.edu

E d i t o r	R e v i e w e r s
Izet Pehlić  Full professor for Educational sciences, Islamic pedagogical faculty of the University of Zenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina izet.pehlic@unze.ba	Reviewer 1: Mahdi Khanjani  Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran. Email: khanjani_m@atu.ac.ir Reviewer 2: Zahra Yousefi  Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Isfahan Branch (Khorasgan), Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran. Email: Z.yousefi1393@khuif.ac.ir

1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In Study Design and Participants, the manuscript highlights diversity in age and background but never analyzes whether these demographic differences produced variations in coping strategies. The reviewers recommend adding a section that analyzes demographic influences on coping patterns.

The Measures section reports that “an interview guide with open-ended questions was developed”. However, the actual themes or sample questions (e.g., emotional, cognitive, social) should be shown in an appendix or summarized more fully. The current description remains too general.

There is no discussion of the interviewers’ positionality. Considering qualitative standards, a reflexive statement about researcher background, potential biases, and influence on interpretation should be added.

The Discussion highlights cognitive reframing but does not describe how participants reframed unemployment (e.g., survival narratives, future-oriented thinking, moral justification). This should be expanded with richer analysis.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In the Data Analysis section, the authors state: “Axial and selective coding techniques were applied...” but do not provide an audit trail, examples of codes, or how disagreements among coders were resolved. This limits reliability.

In the paragraph quoting Participant 3 (“trying to keep my mind from spiraling every morning”), the description is insightful but too brief. More direct quotations, emotional narratives, and contextual background would strengthen thematic depth.

The subthemes “Maintaining Hope and Motivation” and “Coping With Depression and Low Mood” in Table 1 show conceptual overlap. The authors should clarify how these categories differ and provide more precise boundaries.

The paragraph quoting Participant 2 (“I used to introduce myself by my job title—now I don’t know what to say”) suggests a major identity transformation. However, the manuscript does not analyze identity reconstruction using theoretical frameworks such as role theory, social identity theory, or identity disruption following unemployment.

Table 1 lists codes but does not map each subtheme to specific participant quotes. Adding a column with sample excerpts would significantly increase transparency and qualitative rigor.

In the Discussion, the authors write: “These findings correspond to research in organizational and leadership contexts...”. While parallels are interesting, the discussion overextends claims and sometimes implies causality. The manuscript should avoid overstating the applicability of leadership research to unemployed populations.

While leadership parallels are drawn repeatedly, the manuscript does not compare its findings with qualitative unemployment studies, for example research on shame, identity loss, and coping behavior during joblessness. A more grounded comparison is needed.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.