

# Research on Stress Management and Coping Strategies for College Students

Xiaoqiang Jia<sup>1</sup>, Wenjing Chu<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>College of Physical Education, Taishan University, Tai'an 271000, China

<sup>2</sup>Tai'an Special Education Center, Tai'an 271000, China

---

**Abstract:** This study aims to explore the current issues of stress faced by college students and their coping strategies. With the intensification of social competition and changes in the educational environment, college students are experiencing unprecedented psychological and life pressures. These pressures come from various sources, including academic pressure, interpersonal relationship stress, and job-related pressure. This study collected a wealth of data on college students' perceptions of stress and their coping mechanisms through surveys and in-depth interviews. The research found that college students employ various coping strategies when dealing with stress, and the effectiveness of these strategies varies from person to person. In addition, this study also examines the measures that universities can take to assist students in managing stress. The research findings not only provide empirical data for understanding the current psychological health status of college students but also offer valuable management and intervention recommendations for universities and society.

**Keywords:** College students, Psychological stress, Coping strategies, Stress management, Psychological health.

---

## 1. Introduction

In the rapidly changing social environment of today, college students, as a special group, face various challenges and pressures[1]. These pressures stem from academics, future employment prospects, interpersonal relationships, and even societal and familial expectations. In recent years, the mental health issues of college students have garnered increasing societal attention, with stress management problems being particularly prominent. Excessive stress not only affects students' academic performance but can also lead to psychological health issues such as anxiety and depression[2].

This study aims to delve deep into the primary sources of stress faced by college students, analyze the impact of these stressors on students' daily lives and learning, and explore effective stress management and coping strategies. Through empirical research on college students' stress perceptions and coping methods, this paper hopes to provide effective psychological health education and intervention strategies for universities while also offering more practical stress coping guidance for college students[3].

Regarding the research methodology, this paper employs a combination of questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews, collecting data from students with different academic backgrounds and from different universities[4]. The goal is to comprehensively understand the stress levels and coping strategies of college students. Through the analysis of this data, this research aims to present more comprehensive and specific stress management recommendations to help college students better cope with the increasing psychological pressures they face[5].

## 2. Analysis of Multifaceted Pressures Faced by College Students in the 21st Century

In the educational landscape of the 21st century, college students are primarily confronted with significant academic pressure[6]. This includes challenges such as high-intensity coursework, a competitive examination environment, and graduation projects[7]. Additionally, the proliferation of social media has intensified social pressures, impacting students' psychological health and social behaviors. In this digital age, issues like online identity, maintaining interpersonal relationships, and balancing online and offline social activities have become new challenges[8].

Family and societal expectations also serve as significant sources of pressure on college students. Many students feel the high expectations from their families regarding academic achievement, future career choices, and lifestyle. Meanwhile, societal expectations for college students, such as employment success and social status elevation, impose additional pressures. These expectations often clash with personal interests and career planning, leading to psychological tension and conflicts[9].

The college years are a critical stage for personal growth and career development, and the pressures students experience during this period not only affect their current learning and quality of life but can also have profound implications for their future. Therefore, conducting in-depth research into the sources of stress among college students and their impact on psychological health and career development is of great significance for individuals, educational institutions, and society's overall well-being. Such research not only helps us understand the challenges faced by college students but also provides a theoretical basis for offering effective psychological support and career guidance (see Figure 1).

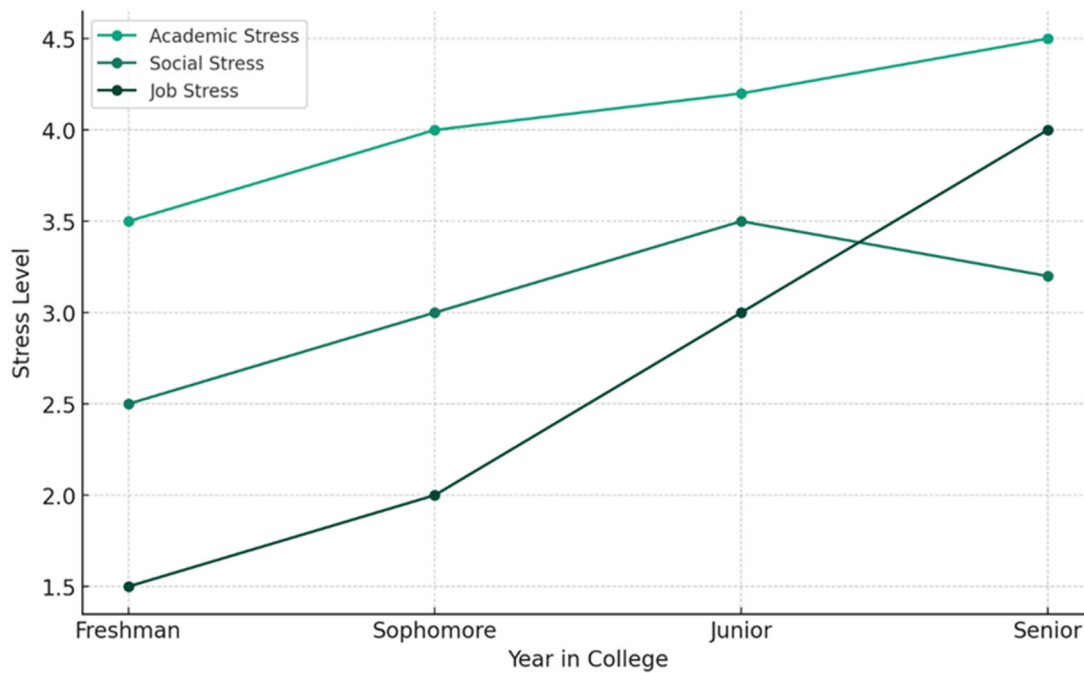


Figure 1. Trend of Different Types of Stress from Freshman to Senior Year

### 3. The Types and Sources of Stress Among College Students

#### 3.1. Academic Stress

In a university environment, academic performance and achievements are one of the primary sources of stress for students. This stress primarily stems from the difficulty of coursework, the competitive nature of exams, and the pursuit of excellent grades. In many higher education systems, grades not only affect personal honor but also directly impact future employment opportunities and the chances of pursuing graduate studies. Furthermore, the competitive atmosphere among students intensifies this pressure, particularly concerning grade rankings and scholarship allocation[10].

In addition to exams and grades, college students also face rigorous academic requirements, such as participating in research projects, writing academic papers, and completing graduation projects. These requirements often demand a significant amount of time and effort from students and require a high level of expertise and skills. Time management becomes a crucial challenge as students need to find a balance between academics, part-time jobs, social activities, and personal leisure. Inappropriate time management can lead to increased stress in both work and studies, subsequently affecting mental health and academic performance.

#### 3.2. Social and Psychological Stress

College students face unique pressures in the realm of interpersonal relationships and social networks. These pressures stem from establishing and maintaining friendships both on and off-campus, navigating romantic relationships, and portraying a positive and appealing image on social media. In the digital age, the influence of social media is growing, and students' performance and interactions in the virtual space have become an important aspect of measuring their social success. Balancing these online and offline social activities can be a challenge for many students, potentially leading to anxiety and self-doubt.

In addition to external social pressures, college students

often grapple with inner struggles, including uncertainty about the future, confusion about career choices, and pressure from family expectations. These internal psychological pressures often lead to anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. Many students may feel lost and helpless in the process of seeking self-identity and career goals. Furthermore, issues within romantic relationships can also add extra psychological stress to college students, affecting their emotions and academic performance.

#### 3.3. The Pressure of Employment and Future Planning

As college students enter their senior years, employment and future career planning become one of the primary pressures they face. The intense competition in the job market, high demands for professional skills and work experience, and the pursuit of stable and meaningful work all contribute to significant psychological stress for students. Many students start preparing for employment during their college years by participating in internships, engaging in career planning activities, and even working part-time alongside their studies. While these activities help enhance their competitiveness in the job market, they also add to students' psychological burdens.

Furthermore, the uncertainty regarding personal future planning is also a common psychological burden. In the context of rapid economic and societal changes, many students feel lost about their career paths and future development. They encounter difficulties in choosing majors and career paths, which involve not only assessing market demand but also considering personal interests and values. This sense of uncertainty about the future often leads to anxiety and stress, impacting students' academic performance and quality of life.

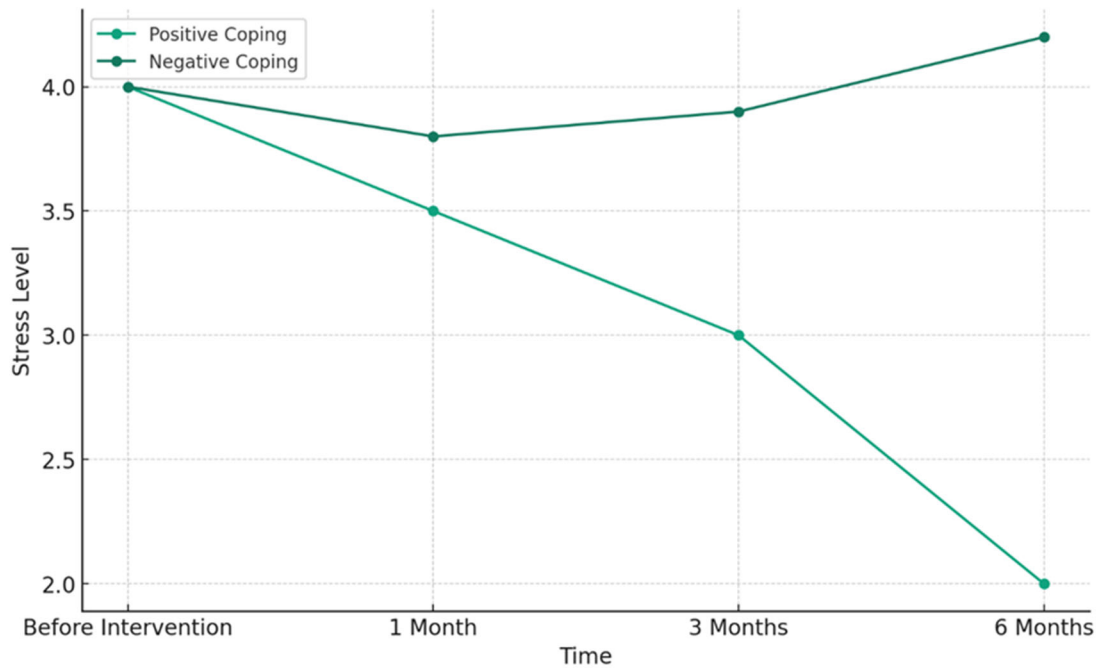
### 4. The Stress Coping Strategies of College Students

College students employ various coping strategies when facing stress, including both positive and negative types.

Positive coping strategies typically include time management, seeking social support, engaging in physical activities, and pursuing hobbies and interests. Effective time management helps students schedule their study and rest time efficiently, reducing stress resulting from a pileup of tasks. Social support, whether from friends, family, or teachers, is crucial for alleviating academic and emotional stress. Participating in sports and recreational activities helps students relax, improve their mood, and contributes to overall psychological well-

being.

However, some students may resort to negative coping strategies such as avoidance, procrastination, or overuse of social media or video games as a temporary escape from reality. These strategies may provide psychological comfort in the short term, but in the long run, they can exacerbate stress and have adverse effects on students' mental health and academic performance (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Effectiveness of Coping Strategies in Stress Reduction Over Time

Understanding college students' stress coping strategies is crucial for universities and educators because it can help them provide more effective psychological support and intervention measures. By encouraging positive coping strategies and helping students identify and change negative coping behaviors, it is possible to effectively reduce students' stress, promote their psychological well-being, and contribute to their academic success.

## 5. Conclusion

This study delved into the primary sources of stress currently faced by college students, including academic, social, familial, and future career planning aspects. It analyzed the impact of these stressors on college students' daily lives and psychological well-being. The research revealed that college students employ various coping strategies when dealing with stress, and the effectiveness of these strategies varies due to individual differences. Positive coping strategies, such as effective time management, seeking social support, and engaging in physical activities, were found to have a positive impact on alleviating stress and enhancing psychological well-being. However, some students resort to negative coping methods like avoidance and procrastination, which can exacerbate stress and have adverse effects on mental health.

The findings of this study provide valuable insights for universities and educators, helping them better understand the stress issues faced by college students and enabling them to offer more effective psychological health education and

support. Additionally, this research offers practical advice for college students on stress management and coping strategies, assisting them in better handling the challenges in their academic and personal lives.

Future research could further explore the characteristics of stress among college students in different cultural backgrounds and educational environments, as well as effective stress management strategies from a cross-cultural perspective. Furthermore, with the development of digital technology, investigating the application of digital tools in stress management is an important direction for future research.

## References

- [1] Lattie E G , Antoni M H , Fletcher M A ,et al.Stress management skills, neuroimmune processes and fatigue levels in persons with chronic fatigue syndrome[J].*Brain Behavior & Immunity*, 2012, 26(6):849-858.DOI:10.1016/j.bbi.2012.02.008.
- [2] Evers K E , Prochaska J O , Johnson J L ,et al.A Randomized Clinical Trial of a Population and Transtheoretical Model-Based Stress Management Intervention[J].*Health Psychology*, 2006, 25(4):521-529.DOI:10.1037/0278-6133.25.4.521.
- [3] Defrank R S , Cooper C L .Worksite Stress Management Interventions:[J].*Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 2013, 2(1):4-10.DOI:10.1108/eb043385.
- [4] Mohr D C , Lovera J , Brown T ,et al.A randomized trial of stress management for the prevention of new brain lesions in MS.[J].*Neurology*, 2012, 79(5):412.DOI:10.1212/WNL.0b013e3182616ff9.

- [5] Devonport T J , Lane A M .Cognitive appraisal of dissertation stress among undergraduate students[J].Psychological Record, 2006, 56(2):259-266.DOI:10.1007/BF03395549.
- [6] Adjei A F M A .Distress and Stress Management Among Distance Learners: A case of Accra College of Education Study Centre[J].International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications (IJSRP), 2018, 8(12).DOI:10.29322/IJSRP.8.12.2018.p8420.
- [7] Alginahi Y M , Ahmed M , Tayan O ,et al.ICT Students, Stress and Coping Strategies: English Perspective A Case Study of Midsized Middle Eastern University[J].Trends in Information Management, 2009, 5(2):111-140.
- [8] Cannella D T , Hamilton J G , Lobel M .Teaching & Learning Guide for: Psychosocial Perspectives on Pregnancy: Prenatal Maternal Stress and Coping[J].Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 2010, 4(2):159-163.DOI:10.1111/j.1751-9004.2009.00249.x.
- [9] Kang H J .Procrastination, Stress Coping Strategies, and Subjective Well-being of College Students: The Mediating Effects of Self-esteem[J].Discourse 201, 2012, 15(1):67-92.DOI:10.17789/discou.2012.15.1.003.
- [10] Hirokawa K , Yagi A , Miyata Y .An Examination of the Effects of Stress Management Training for Japanese College Students of Social Work[J].International Journal of Stress Management, 2002, 9(2):113-123.DOI:10.1023/A:1014906820573.