

# Psychological Stress and Coping Strategies in Modern Society

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**Abstract.** This paper discusses psychological stress and its coping strategies in modern society. With the rapid development of society, individuals are faced with multiple stressors, including work, family, relationships, economic, socio-cultural and health. Psychological stress not only has an impact on physical and mental health, but may also lead to behavioural problems and deterioration of social relationships. In order to effectively cope with psychological stress, individuals can adopt various strategies such as time management, relaxation training, seeking social support, and professional help. In addition, community support and policy interventions play an important role in enhancing mental health. Through case studies, this paper highlights the importance of help-seeking. Although the study provides important insights, there are limitations such as under-representative sample, homogenous methodology, and neglect of cultural factors. Future research should focus on sample diversity, incorporate research methods, conduct long-term follow-up, consider cultural differences, and explore emerging stressors for a comprehensive understanding of psychological stress and its coping strategies.

**Keywords:** psychological stress, coping strategies, social support, case studies.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background

The rapid development of the twenty-first century has brought about tremendous social, economic and technological progress, but it has also triggered a wide range of psychological pressures. Competition in the workplace has become increasingly fierce, and the development of information technology has blurred the boundaries between work and life, leading many people to fall into a "24-hour on-line" mode of work. Changes in family structure and the transformation of social values have increased the pressure on family responsibilities and interpersonal relationships, especially in single-parent and dual-income families. In terms of economic pressures, urbanisation and the high cost of living have left many people facing financial difficulties. The high standards of success and appearance in social media and popular culture have also created invisible cultural pressures on individuals [1]. At the same time, lifestyle changes have triggered health issues, with rising rates of chronic and mental illnesses, and health anxiety becoming increasingly prevalent. These multiple stressors in modern society urgently require effective coping strategies to improve individual mental health and the overall well-being of society.

### 1.2. Significance of the study

It is of great significance to study psychological stress and its coping strategies in modern society. From an individual perspective, understanding the causes and manifestations of psychological stress can help individuals identify and manage their own stress, prevent the deterioration of psychological problems, and thus improve their quality of life and coping ability. From a societal level, psychological stress not only affects individual health, but also leads to decreased work efficiency and tense interpersonal relationships, negatively affecting social productivity and stability. Research on and promotion of effective coping strategies can help improve the psychological resilience of groups, promote the healthy development of society, and reduce the social costs caused by psychological problems. From the perspective of policy formulation, the prevalence of psychological stress problems requires governments and related organisations to pay attention to and improve



mental health services and social support systems [2]. The study of psychological stress and its coping strategies provides a scientific basis for policy making and promotes the enhancement of social welfare. In conclusion, this study is of great practical significance at the individual, social, and policy levels, helping to improve the overall health and harmony of individuals and society.

### **1.3. Overview of the thesis structure**

This paper will discuss the following aspects: firstly, analyse the main sources of psychological stress in modern society; secondly, explore the impacts of psychological stress on individuals' physiological, psychological, behavioural, and social dimensions; then, put forward a multidimensional strategy for coping with psychological stress; lastly, further explore the practical application of the strategy through typical case studies, and summarize and look forward to the study.

## **2. Psychological stressors in modern society**

### **2.1. Work stress**

Work stress is one of the most common sources of stress in modern society, stemming from a variety of factors. Increased workloads lead to long hours of overtime work, difficulty in taking breaks, and chronic fatigue. Career instability triggers particular anxiety, with employees worrying about losing their jobs or not being able to be promoted, especially during economic downturns or company reorganisations. This uncertainty exacerbates stress. Work-life boundaries are blurring, and technological developments make it difficult for many people to relax completely even outside of working hours, with private time constantly encroached upon. Tension in interpersonal relationships is also an important source of stress. Relationships with co-workers and supervisors in the workplace can add to the psychological burden if they are not handled properly. High expectations and standards make employees face multiple skill requirements and high performance pressure, and the fear of not being able to meet expectations can affect self-confidence.



**Figure 1.** Work stress

### **2.2. Family and relationship stress**

Family and relationship stress is a common source of psychological stress in modern society. Changes in family structure, such as the increase in the number of single-parent families and dual-income families, have brought about more family responsibilities. Parents need to take care of children and manage household chores after work, and often feel short of time and energy, leading to increased psychological pressure [3]. Conflicts, miscommunication and crises of trust in marriages also strain the relationship between husband and wife, affecting family harmony and stability.

With regard to parent-child relationships, parents' high expectations of their children often translate into strict demands, leading to tensions in the parent-child relationship and great psychological stress for both parties. Social conflicts, misunderstandings and competition in interpersonal relationships

are also sources of stress, and although social media allow people to stay in touch, virtual interactions can exacerbate feelings of loneliness and alienation. These family and relationship stresses not only affect emotional and mental health, but can also trigger negative behavioural responses such as social withdrawal and irritability. Understanding and alleviating these stresses is critical to maintaining family harmony and personal well-being.

### 2.3. Economic pressures

Economic stress is a pervasive source of psychological stress in modern societies, with far-reaching effects on the mental health of individuals and families. The rising cost of living is a major source of economic stress. Increasing costs of housing, education and health care have placed a heavy financial burden on many people, especially in large cities, where soaring property prices put young people and low-income families under even greater pressure. Such pressure may lead to anxiety and helplessness, affecting daily life and work performance. Unemployment and career instability also exacerbate financial stress. The modern workplace is highly competitive and many people are at risk of unemployment or unstable job status. Recessions and industry changes make employees uneasy about the future, which can produce low moods and reduced self-confidence. Increasing debt burden is also an important factor. Home purchase, education and consumer loans have pushed many people into debt, and the pressure of high repayments often leads to anxiety and depression. Socio-economic inequalities also exacerbate economic pressures, and low-income groups face additional challenges in securing livelihoods and social services, further adding to their psychological burdens.

Economic stress not only affects the mental health of individuals, but may also have a negative impact on family relationships and social interactions. Prolonged economic stress may lead to family conflicts and strained parent-child relationships. Therefore, understanding the causes of economic stress and actively seeking ways to cope with it are crucial to improving the quality of life of individuals and families.



**Figure 2.** Economic pressures

### 2.4. Socio-cultural pressures

Sociocultural stress is an important source of psychological stress in modern societies, stemming mainly from cultural expectations, social norms and the dissemination of information. Cultural expectations and social norms have a significant impact on the behaviour and values of individuals. In many cultures, success is often measured by criteria such as wealth, status, and appearance. This idealised lifestyle puts significant pressure on individuals, particularly young people, who are often faced with expectations from family and society that they must conform to these standards in order to be recognised. The popularity of social media has exacerbated socio-cultural pressures. On the platforms, individuals are exposed to carefully curated displays of the "perfect life" and are prone to comparison and self-doubt [4]. Many people feel anxious and isolated because they are unable to live

up to these idealised standards, affecting their self-identity. Sociocultural pressures are also reflected in stereotypical gender roles and career choices. Many cultures expect different things from men and women, causing individuals to face obstacles in pursuing their personal dreams. For example, women often face gender discrimination in workplace promotions, while men may feel shame in expressing their feelings and seeking help. Adaptation difficulties brought about by social change also add to the stress. Young people, in their pursuit of self-fulfilment, are often confronted with the conflict between traditional and modern concepts, and feel confused and uneasy.

## **2.5. Health-related stress**

Health-related stress is an important source of psychological stress in modern society and is mainly related to physical health conditions, chronic diseases and lifestyle. Chronic diseases such as diabetes mellitus and hypertension not only cause physical discomfort, but may also trigger persistent psychological stress. Patients need to cope with lifestyle changes, long-term medical costs and treatment uncertainty, leading to anxiety and depression. Lifestyle choices have a significant impact on health stress. Modern, fast-paced living makes it difficult for many people to maintain healthy eating and exercise habits. Lack of exercise and unhealthy diets can lead to obesity and other health problems, which can add to the psychological burden. Lack of sleep and excessive psychological stress can also affect physical health and further increase psychological stress. Societal concerns and expectations about health also exacerbate individual stress. Ideal body image and health standards are frequently emphasised in social media, making individuals feel that it is difficult to meet these standards, and young people in particular may feel inferior as a result. Health anxiety is a common psychological phenomenon, and individuals' excessive concern about their health can lead to unnecessary stress, especially in an age of information overload, where access to health information can easily trigger panic.

## **3. Effects of psychological stress**

### **3.1. Physiological effects**

The effects of psychological stress on physiological health are profound and complex, and prolonged psychological stress can trigger a wide range of physiological responses that affect multiple systems in the body. Stress activates the "fight or flight" response, leading to increased levels of stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline. While these hormones help to cope with stress in the short term, long term high levels may suppress the immune system, increasing the risk of infection and chronic inflammation. Psychological stress is closely linked to cardiovascular health. Chronic stress can lead to cardiovascular diseases such as high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke. Stress increases heart rate and blood pressure, and prolonged exposure to it can be taxing on the heart. Stress also affects the digestive system, leading to indigestion, hyperacidity and irritable bowel syndrome. Appetite may decrease or increase as a result of stress, leading to weight changes and malnutrition. Psychological stress may also affect the quality of sleep, leading to insomnia or excessive dreaming, which can trigger fatigue and poor concentration. Lack of sleep can in turn exacerbate psychological stress, creating a vicious cycle.

### **3.2. Psychological impact**

Psychological stress has a significant impact on an individual's mental health and can lead to a wide range of negative emotions and psychological disorders. Chronic psychological stress often triggers anxiety and depression, and individuals may feel helpless and hopeless, losing interest in life. This emotional state not only affects an individual's sense of well-being, but may also lead to estrangement in relationships, affecting family and work. Psychological stress can lead to loss of concentration and memory. Constant stress impairs the cognitive functioning of the brain, and individuals have difficulty processing information and making decisions, affecting academic and work performance and leading to reduced efficiency. Mood swings triggered by psychological stress make individuals

irritable, anxious and irritable. These emotions not only affect how they feel, but may also be distressing to those around them, leading to strained relationships [5]. In some cases, individuals may resort to unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as alcohol or substance abuse, to relieve stress. Such short-term approaches often exacerbate mental health problems and lead to addictive behaviours.

### **3.3. Behavioural influences**

Psychological stress has a significant impact on individual behaviour, often leading to unhealthy lifestyles and poor behavioural habits. Psychological stress may lead to changes in eating habits. Many people under stress tend to choose foods high in sugar and fat for short-term emotional relief. This type of diet not only affects health, but can also lead to obesity and other related problems. Stress also affects exercise habits. When feeling stressed, many people may reduce or stop exercising, and the lack of exercise can lead to a decrease in physical strength, further increasing the risk of anxiety and depression. Stress can cause individuals to perform less well socially and at work. Under high pressure, individuals may become introverted and reduce their interaction with others, which can affect relationships and lead to increased loneliness. Stress may contribute to an increase in risky behaviours such as alcohol, tobacco and substance abuse. Individuals often escape from stress through these unhealthy means, and while they may feel relief in the short term, these behaviours can be seriously detrimental to health in the long term. Psychological stress also reduces work efficiency, affecting attention and concentration, leading to work errors and reduced productivity.

### **3.4. Social impact**

Psychological stress not only affects the physical and mental health of the individual, but also has a profound impact on society in terms of interpersonal relationships, the work environment and the economy. Psychological stress affects interpersonal relationships. Individuals may become irritable and withdrawn under stress, leading to communication barriers with others and increased loneliness, creating a vicious circle. The work environment is also affected. High-pressure environments can lead to decreased employee satisfaction and morale, affecting teamwork and efficiency. Employees under stress tend to tire, make mistakes, and increase absenteeism, leading to higher turnover and training costs. The economic impact of psychological stress is significant. An increase in mental health problems can lead to higher healthcare costs and impair labour market productivity, affecting the national economy. Stress may also reduce an individual's participation in society, with stressed individuals tending to avoid socialising and pay less attention to social matters, weakening social cohesion.

## **4. Strategies for coping with psychological stress**

### **4.1. Individual level**

Individual-level coping strategies are critical to alleviating psychological stress, mainly including self-management, emotion regulation, and lifestyle adjustment. Self-management is fundamental. Individuals should set reasonable goals and priorities and plan their time wisely to avoid unnecessary stressors. Clear goals can help cope with challenges in life and work. Emotional regulation is key. Individuals need to recognise and understand their emotions and learn to remain calm under stress. Anxiety can be effectively relieved and mental resilience enhanced through techniques such as positive thinking meditation and deep breathing. Lifestyle adjustments are equally important. Maintaining a regular routine, eating a balanced diet and exercising moderately can help improve physical fitness and enhance mental resilience. Moderate exercise can also release stress and enhance a sense of well-being. A good social network can reduce stress. Interaction with family and friends provides emotional support and enhances coping skills.

## **4.2. Social support**

Social support is crucial in coping with psychological stress and helps individuals to relieve stress through emotional support, information support and material support. Emotional support provides a sense of security and belonging. Support from family and friends can ease anxiety by talking and sharing feelings, and studies have shown that emotional support can help reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety. Information support helps individuals find solutions. Talking to others provides new perspectives and coping strategies, and participating in support groups or counselling services can provide valuable information and resources. Material support is equally important, including financial assistance and practical help. When individuals face difficulties, the support of family and friends can ease the psychological burden. In addition, the quality and quantity of social support affects an individual's coping outcomes. A good social network enhances psychological resilience and helps individuals cope more effectively with challenges, while a lack of support increases mental health risks.

## **4.3. Professional help**

Seeking professional help is an effective strategy in coping with psychological stress, especially when individuals are unable to cope alone. Professional help includes counselling, therapy and pharmacological interventions. Counselling provides a safe space for individuals to talk and explore their inner feelings. Counsellors help identify stressors and understand emotions, providing coping strategies such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) to rebuild positive thinking. Psychotherapy is used for individuals with deeper issues. Therapists use dialogue to uncover underlying trauma and develop targeted programmes to improve coping skills. Medication may also be necessary for issues such as severe anxiety and depression. Doctors may recommend antidepressants or anti-anxiety medications in combination with psychotherapy for better results. Mental health education and support groups provide mutual support and experience sharing to help individuals feel a sense of belonging.

## **4.4. Social policy and community support**

Social policies and community support are critical in addressing mental stress, through resources and services to help individuals manage their mental health. Governments should develop policies to ensure accessibility of mental health services, including financial support and community mental health centres, to lower the threshold for seeking help. Community support is particularly important. Establish mutual help groups and support networks to provide emotional and substantive help to members, and organise regular mental health activities to raise public awareness of mental health and eliminate prejudice. Enterprises should also implement mental health policies, provide psychological counselling and create a favourable working environment to help their employees manage stress and improve work efficiency. For their part, schools should set up psychological counselling centres and provide support to help students cope with learning pressure and interpersonal problems, and enhance their mental resilience.

## **5. Case studies**

### **5.1. Introduction to typical cases**

Li is a 35-year-old software engineer working for a fast-growing technology company. In recent years, he has felt tremendous work pressure due to tight project schedules and increased workload. Working hours are often extended, leaving little time for communication with family and friends. The competitive work environment made him feel anxious and tired, and he gradually developed symptoms such as insomnia and poor concentration.

Li's stress comes mainly from work, family and relationships. Work pressure makes it difficult for him to balance his life, resulting in his family life being affected, his partner feeling lost as a result,

and the relationship between husband and wife gradually becoming strained. He feels lonely and helpless, and his mental health is affected.

After realising the problem, Lee decided to seek professional help. He contacted a counsellor and started regular counselling. The counsellor helped him identify stressors and taught time management skills and relaxation exercises. In addition, he joined a mental health support group at his workplace and shared his experiences with his colleagues, from which he gained emotional support.

After several months of counselling, Li's psychological state improved significantly. He learnt to manage his time better, gradually resumed communication with his partner, established a good social network and felt more understanding and support.

Lee's case demonstrates the profound impact of psychological stress on an individual's life and the strategies for coping effectively with stress through professional help and community support, providing valuable lessons for people facing similar dilemmas.

## **5.2. Analysis and discussion**

Lee's case reveals the impact of psychological stress and coping strategies that provide important insights.

Firstly, the diversity of stressors was evident. His stress came from work, family and relationships, emphasising the need to consider all aspects when addressing psychological problems and the critical importance of conducting a comprehensive self-assessment.

Second, the courage to seek help was key to Little Lee's transformation. While many people feel ashamed and reluctant to seek help when faced with psychological stress, Li's initiative opened the way for change. Professional guidance can provide effective coping strategies.

In addition, the importance of community support was equally significant in Lee's case. He gained emotional support and established social connections by participating in mental health support groups. A good social network can effectively help individuals cope with stress, so it is important to build a community support network.

Finally, mental health education played a positive role in Li's transformation. Learning about time management and relaxation training enabled him to better manage his emotions, and mental health education should be widely available to improve public coping skills.

In summary, Xiao Li's case reflects the complexity of psychological stress and emphasises the importance of help-seeking, community support and mental health education. Together, these factors contribute to individuals coping more effectively with psychological stress and improving their quality of life.

## **6. Summary and outlook**

### **6.1. Summary of main points**

This paper discusses psychological stress and its coping strategies in modern society, with the following main points:

Sources of psychological stress are diverse. Factors such as work, family, relationships, finances and health combine to affect an individual's mental health, especially in a fast-paced environment where stress is increasingly significant. Psychological stress has far-reaching effects. Not only does it lead to reduced immunity and sleep disorders, but it can also trigger anxiety, depression and behavioural problems that affect social relationships.

Effective strategies for coping with psychological stress include self-regulation methods such as time management, relaxation training and exercise. Support from family and friends can alleviate stress, while professional help such as counselling and social policy support enhance the accessibility of

mental health services. The case study highlights the importance of seeking help. Actively seeking professional and community support can effectively enhance coping skills and improve quality of life.

## **6.2. Limitations of the study**

This paper has the following limitations in the study of psychological stress and its coping strategies. The sample is not representative enough. The case studies focused on specific individuals and did not cover different ages, genders and social backgrounds, limiting the general applicability of the results. Single research method. It mainly relies on qualitative analyses and lacks the support of quantitative data. Combining quantitative research could reveal the relationship between psychological stress and various factors more comprehensively. Time constraints affect the depth of the study. Social changes may alter stressors and coping strategies, and long-term follow-up studies would be more helpful in understanding these changes. Neglect of cultural factors. The manifestation of psychological stress varies according to cultural differences, and this paper did not fully consider these effects. Future research should focus on cross-cultural comparisons to gain more comprehensive insights.

## **6.3. Directions for future research**

Future research on psychological stress and coping strategies in modern society may consider the following directions. Expanding the scope of the sample. Cover individuals of different ages, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds to enhance the representativeness of the findings. Combine quantitative and qualitative methods. Mixed research can provide more convincing data, with quantitative surveys revealing trends and qualitative interviews delving into individual experiences. In addition, conduct long-term follow-up studies. As society changes, psychological stressors and coping strategies may change, and long-term studies can help understand the impact of these dynamics on mental health. Also, focus on cultural differences. Stress manifestations and coping styles may differ across cultures, and comparative studies can provide a more comprehensive perspective. Explore emerging stressors. New stressors such as social media and climate change continue to emerge, and research should focus on their impact on mental health and coping strategies.

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