

**STRESS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ADAPTATION (COPING) STRATEGIES:
THEORETICAL MODELS**

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Abstract: This article analyzes the theoretical models of stress and psychological adaptation (coping) strategies within the framework of modern psychology. The study examines the concept of stress, its causal factors, and the mechanisms of individual adaptation to stress. In addition, the coping theory developed by Lazarus and Folkman, as well as approaches proposed in contemporary research, are reviewed. The findings indicate that coping strategies contribute to psychological resilience, enhance social adaptation, and facilitate the development of effective behavioral patterns.

Keywords: stress, coping strategies, psychological adaptation, emotional state, stress management, psychological defense, adaptation

INTRODUCTION

In modern society, individuals are increasingly exposed to various stress-inducing factors. The intensification of social, economic, and psychological pressures has made adaptation to stress a significant scientific and practical issue. Stress and psychological adaptation (coping) strategies are considered one of the most important and relevant areas of contemporary psychological science. Today, the rapid pace of life, increasing social demands, high levels of pressure in educational and professional activities, and global changes require an in-depth study of individuals' resilience to stress and their adaptive mechanisms. In this regard, stress management and adaptation processes are regarded as an important scientific problem not only in clinical psychology but also in educational psychology, social psychology, and personality development psychology.

In scientific literature, the concept of stress was initially introduced by H. Selye within the framework of the General Adaptation Syndrome, where stress is defined as the organism's response to external and internal demands. Later, R. Lazarus and S. Folkman, through their transactional model of stress, interpreted stress as a process of interaction between the individual and the environment involving cognitive appraisal, and defined coping strategies as methods oriented toward problem-solving and emotional regulation. This approach demonstrated that stress is not merely a biological response but a complex psychological process involving cognitive appraisal and behavioral strategies.

Furthermore, contemporary research has extensively examined adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies, as well as their relationship with individual characteristics (temperament, available resources, level of self-awareness), social support systems, and cultural factors. These perspectives allow for understanding stress adaptation as a dynamic and multifactorial process.

This article analyzes the main theoretical models of stress and psychological adaptation strategies, highlights their scientific foundations, and examines their role and significance in contemporary psychological research.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

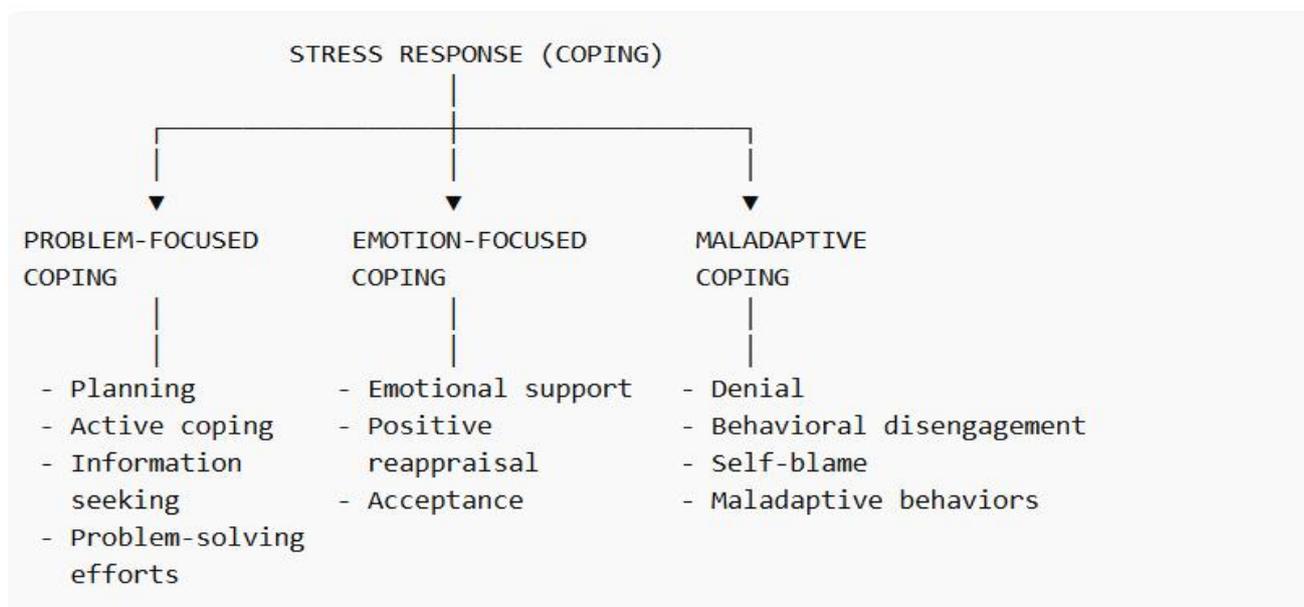
Research on stress and psychological adaptation (coping) strategies has been widely addressed across various branches of psychology. Early fundamental approaches in this field can be traced back to the General Adaptation Syndrome theory developed by H. Selye. Selye interpreted stress as the organism's physiological response to external stimuli and divided it into three stages: alarm, resistance, and exhaustion. This approach served as an important scientific foundation for understanding stress from a biological perspective.¹

Another significant theoretical contribution is the transactional model developed by R. Lazarus and S. Folkman. According to this model, stress is not merely the result of an external event itself, but rather the outcome of a cognitive appraisal process between the individual and the environment. Within this framework, coping strategies are classified into two main categories: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. This classification enables a deeper understanding of the psychological mechanisms involved in stress management.

Similarly, the COPE model developed by C. Carver, M. Scheier, and J. Weintraub highlights the multidimensional structure of coping strategies. This model identifies strategies such as active coping, planning, seeking social support, denial, and behavioral disengagement. This approach emphasizes the complexity of coping processes and their dependence on individual characteristics.

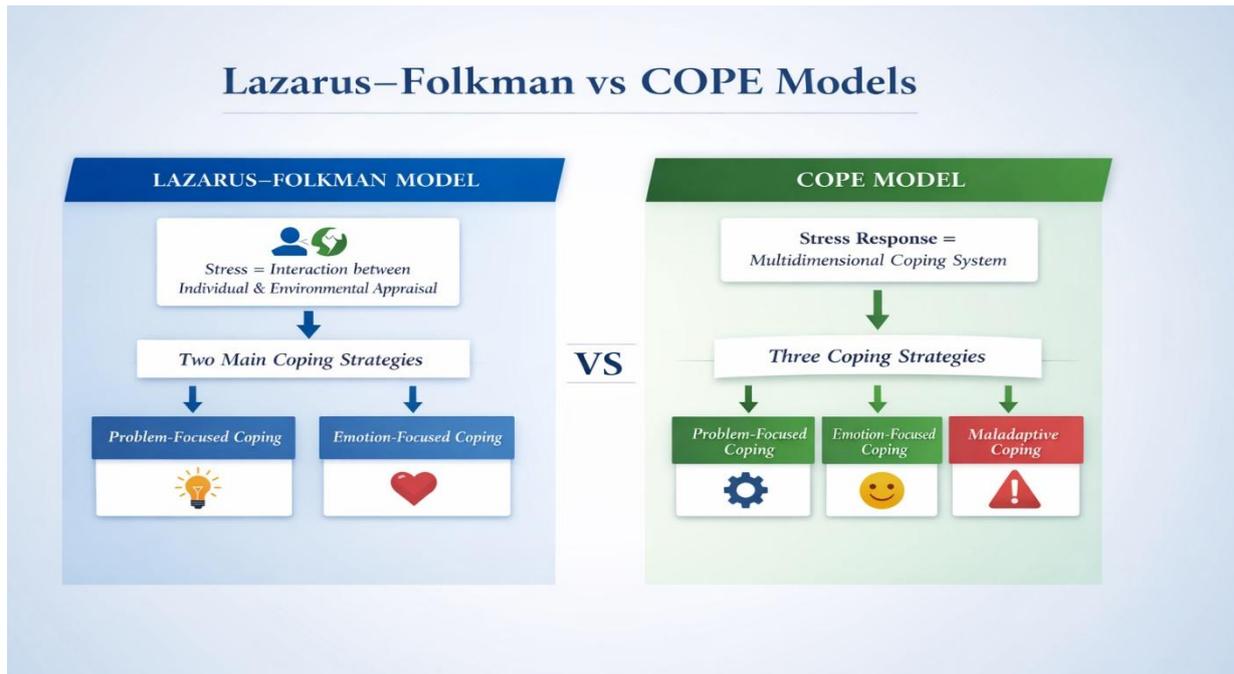
In contemporary research, coping strategies are increasingly studied in relation to personal resources, self-efficacy, psychological resilience (hardiness), and the social environment. In addition, the influence of cultural context on stress perception and response has become one of the most relevant areas of investigation.

The methodology section of this study is based on a theoretical-analytical approach. Scientific sources, monographs, international and local articles, as well as classical and contemporary psychological studies, were comparatively analyzed. During the research process, content analysis was used to identify theoretical models of stress and coping strategies, and to compare their similarities and differences. Furthermore, a systems approach was applied to consider stress and adaptation processes as an integrated psychological system.



¹ Zeidner, M., & Endler, N. S. (2021). *Handbook of Coping: Theory, Research, Applications*. Wiley.

Lazarus–Folkman vs COPE Models



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the reviewed theoretical sources indicates that stress and psychological adaptation processes are regarded in contemporary psychology as a complex and multifaceted system. While the biological model of stress proposed by H. Selye explains stress as a physiological response, R. Lazarus and S. Folkman interpret stress as a psychological phenomenon associated with cognitive appraisal processes. This approach made it possible to understand stress as a dynamic interaction between an individual's internal resources and external environmental demands.²

The COPE model further expands these theoretical perspectives by providing a systematic classification of stress-coping strategies. According to the findings, problem-focused coping strategies are the most effective in reducing sources of stress and strengthening an individual's active role in dealing with difficulties. Emotion-focused coping strategies, on the other hand, contribute to maintaining emotional stability under stressful conditions. However, the use of maladaptive coping strategies may, in the long term, increase psychological distress and reduce the level of adaptation.

Therefore, the effectiveness of coping strategies is closely related to individual characteristics, the level of social support, and the cultural context. This highlights the necessity of a comprehensive approach in developing psychological interventions for stress management.

CONCLUSION

This article analyzed the theoretical models of stress and psychological adaptation (coping) strategies. Based on scientific literature, it can be stated that stress in modern psychology is viewed not only as a biological or emotional reaction, but also as a complex cognitive appraisal process between the individual and the environment. While the General Adaptation Syndrome theory proposed by H. Selye explains the physiological basis of stress, the transactional model developed by R. Lazarus and S. Folkman interprets stress as a psychological phenomenon linked to subjective appraisal and coping processes.

² Aldwin, C. M. (2026). *Stress, Coping, and Development: An Integrative Perspective*. Routledge.

The COPE model further extends coping strategies by classifying them into problem-focused, emotion-focused, and maladaptive types. Research findings indicate that problem-focused coping strategies enhance active adaptation and help eliminate sources of stress. Emotion-focused strategies play an important role in maintaining emotional stability, whereas maladaptive strategies may contribute to increased psychological distress over time.

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