



University Students' Stress-Relief Video Viewing Behavior: A Stress-Based Perspective

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Abstract. Stress-relief video has rapidly gained popularity, serving as a major approach to relaxation and emotional regulation among university students. This study analyses the relationship between the sources of stress, stress levels and the viewing behaviour of stress-relief videos among university students based on a stress-oriented perspective in China. A questionnaire survey was conducted on 400 university students, and methods such as descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, T-tests, ANOVA and ordinal logistic regression were employed. The findings reveal that employment and academic pressures are the primary sources of stress for university students; viewing stress-relief videos is one of the most common stress-relief strategies adopted by students to alleviate stress, and there is a significant correlation between viewing behaviour and stress levels—students with higher stress levels to view such video has more frequently and are more likely to engage in interactive behaviours such as liking, commenting and sharing after viewing. Furthermore, significant differences are also observed in stress perception and preferences across factors such as gender, grade, and whether they are college-to-university transfer students. This study provides empirical evidence for understanding the stress-coping mechanisms of university students in the context of new media, and offers practical implications for mental health education in higher education and facilitating students' self-adjustment.

Keywords: University Students, Psychological Stress, Stress-Relief Video, Viewing Behavior, Logistic Regression.

1 Introduction

University students are in a critical transitional stage from adolescence to adulthood, with incomplete physical and psychological maturity and relatively weak self-regulation abilities. Faced with real-world problems such as learning tasks, employment difficulties, interpersonal relationship conflicts, emotional confusion, and financial constraints, they are prone to intense emotional reactions and persistent psychological stress. Without timely and effective counseling, such stress may induce psychological problems including anxiety, depression, sleep disturbances, and even lead to psychological disorders or mental illnesses. How to effectively alleviate the stress of university

students and promote their physical and mental health development has become an urgent task for higher education institutions.

The widespread adoption of the internet and digital media has profoundly changed people's lifestyles and information access patterns. Short-video platforms have risen rapidly and deeply embedded into daily life. Among the diverse of videos, a category of videos tagged with stress-relief has gradually gained favor among internet users, especially young adults. Such videos embrace a wide spectrum of content, such as donkey hoof trimming, pimple squeezing, carpet cleaning, soap cutting, vintage item restoration, ASMR (Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response), and slow-life vlogs. Despite their seemingly ordinary and even trivial, they have attracted substantial audience and claimed to alleviate stress and relax the mind and body.

When viewing such videos, individuals direct their full attention to the specific situations presented in the content. By following the actions of the characters in the videos, they can indirectly experience a sense of control, rhythm, and accomplishment. Such vicarious experiences can induce relaxation and positive affect, thereby exerting a stress-buffering effect^[1]. To date, "stress-relief videos" lack a consensus-based academic definition. Evidence regarding their stress-reducing efficacy relies heavily on subjective self-reports, with a notable absence of systematic empirical research. Yet there is a dearth of empirical evidence on whether post-viewing interactive behaviors can serve as behavioral markers of high stress levels among university students, and few studies have clarified how stress sources and levels shape students' preferences for specific types of stress-relief videos.

For the university student demographic, can stress-relief videos genuinely and effectively mitigate stress? How does the efficacy of different types of stress-relief videos vary among students with distinct stress sources and levels? Furthermore, how do the stress states of university students influence their content preferences, viewing frequency, and interactive behaviors regarding these videos? All these questions warrant in-depth exploration.

This research focuses on the viewing behavior and post-viewing interactive behavior of university students regarding stress-relief videos, investigating the stress status of the university student demographic, analyzing the relationship between stress levels and stress-relief video viewing behavior. The study empirically verifies whether active interactive behaviors such as liking and sharing are specific behavioral manifestations of high-stress students when using stress-relief videos, and clarifies the differentiation characteristics of video type preferences among students with different stress sources and levels. It reveals the internal mechanism of stress-relief videos as a daily stress coping method for university students. It not only provides a theoretical basis for studying university students' stress but also offers practical guidance for managers to proactively monitor and address fluctuations in students' stress conditions and its changes through these behavioral phenomena.

2 Literature Review and Research Hypotheses

2.1 Literature Review

The stress experienced by university students is characterized by its diversity and complexity, primarily encompassing multiple dimensions such as academic, employment, financial, and interpersonal stress. Intense academic competition, heavy study workloads, and excessively high self-expectations collectively engender academic stress. Particularly under the trend of “involution (neijuan)”, a subset of university students becomes entrenched in hyper-competition, thereby compromising their psychological well-being.

The difficulty of college students' employment has become increasingly prominent in recent years. Its causes include the imbalance between supply and demand, insufficient job-hunting and interview experience, and unreasonable self-understanding and career positioning. Employment pressure on college students is characterized by periodicity, with final-year students being a high-pressure group. Fan et al. (2022) investigated 3,014 prospective graduates across 15 universities in Zhejiang Province, pre-graduation employment anxiety is generally prevalent. Their findings demonstrated that family economic conditions, parents' salary expectations, individual employability, and objective support serve as significant predictors of employment anxiety [2]. With the expansion of college enrollment and the growing number of university students, the population of financially disadvantaged students has also increased. Irrational consumption and credit-based consumption have caused some university students to suffer from financial pressure [3]. As university students navigate a critical stage of socialization, their interpersonal stress extends beyond typical relationships with classmates, peers, teachers, and family. This stress originates from the conflict between subjective cognition and objective reality, rendering their interpersonal pressures increasingly diversified and complex. Furthermore, stress related to romantic relationships, body image, and future uncertainty constitutes other common psychological burdens within this demographic. [4].

Stress is not an isolated phenomenon. Diverse stressors among college students interact with each other and fluctuate dynamically, thus forming a complex stress network. Spillover effects exist among academic, romantic, interpersonal, and financial pressures [5]. Gender differences are prominent in stress research. Females receive more social support but also exhibit a higher fear of negative appearance evaluation. Conversely, male students, burdened by traditional gender role expectations and masculinity stress, are more prone to externalizing problems, such as online gaming addiction [6]. In terms of academic year, stress experience presents an inverted U-shaped curve, with second-year undergraduates report the highest overall psychological pressure, followed by third-year, first-year, and fourth-year students [7]. Students from rural areas and small towns experience significantly higher levels of family-induced stress and social pressure compared to those from cities [8]. The majority of university students tend to use positive or integrated coping approaches, although a subset of them still relies on negative coping strategies [9]. Negative coping strategies such as avoidance, self-blame, and substance abuse often exacerbate the adverse effects of stress. Yin.L (2022)

revealed that impoverished university students exhibited significantly higher levels of employment pressure than non-impoverished students and were more prone to adopting negative coping strategies ^[10].

Research on the impact of stress on university students has shifted from simple causal relationship exploration to the analysis of complex mediating and moderating mechanisms, forming a relatively systematic theoretical framework. Stress does not directly lead to psychological and behavioral outcomes; rather, it acts through a series of mediating variables and is influenced by various moderating factors ^[11]. The level of psychological stress is closely related to mental health status ^[12]. The impact of stress on mental health exhibits a cumulative effect. Long-term stress can deplete psychological resources, subsequently triggering to emotional issues such as anxiety and depression ^[13]. Perceived stress significantly predicts depression levels among university students ^[14]. The impact of stress on cognitive function is also empirically supported. High stress impairs the working memory capacity of students with high test anxiety ^[15]. This cognitive impairment can trigger a vicious cycle, where stress induces cognitive decline, which in turn reduces problem-solving efficiency and exacerbates the stress experience ^[16]. Notably, perceived stress compromises sleep quality through the rumination and negative emotions, while the resulting sleep disturbances further diminish the individual's stress-coping capacity ^[17].

Empirical analysis revealed that distinct stressors influence various dimensions of mental health via emotional mechanisms ^[18]. Emotion regulation difficulties and self-cognitive factors, such as self-efficacy and core self-evaluations, play a mediating role in the stress response process ^[19]. The moderating role of social support is emphasized in multiple studies, showing a significant negative correlation with stress and effectively buffers its adverse impacts ^[20]. Similarly, the moderating role of personality traits is receiving increasing attention. Gender moderates the pathway through which neuroticism influences mobile phone dependence via perceived stress ^[21].

With the development of short-video platforms, stress-relief videos have gradually gained traction. Given that university students constitute the largest user demographic on these platforms, such content has naturally become highly prevalent among this cohort. Stress-relief videos provide a safe, predictable audiovisual environment, enabling individuals to temporarily detach from stressful situations ^[22]. Soothing ASMR sounds can reduce heart rate and alleviate muscle tension, while visually orderly scenes can effectively mitigate anxiety. Consequently, featuring simple, repetitive content and a soothing tempo, stress-relief videos induce a cognitive resting state, thereby promoting both attentional recovery and emotional regulation. By showcasing the transition from chaos to order, order-based stress-relief videos provide audiences with a perceived sense of control and achievement, resulting in vicarious fulfillment. Destruction-type videos provide a harmless outlet for suppressed aggression and destructive urges, facilitating psychological release and alleviating the anxiety associated with a perceived loss of control. By focusing on minute actions and mundane processes, slow-living stress-relief videos redirect viewers' attention away from future-oriented anxieties and past rumination back to the present moment, facilitating a cognitive shift from a "doing mode" to a "being mode" that ultimately fosters inner tranquility.

2.2 Research Hypotheses

Based on the above literature review and analysis, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H1: There are significant differences in the stress sources and stress levels of university students based on gender, grade, and enrollment type (regular undergraduate vs. admission modes for college-to-undergraduate program).

H2: The stress level of university students has a significant impact on their viewing behavior regarding stress-relief videos.

H2a: Students who engage in liking, commenting, or sharing after viewing have significantly higher stress levels than those who simply scroll past the content.

H2b: There is a positive correlation between the frequency of viewing stress-relief videos and reported stress levels.

3 Data Collection

This study employed a questionnaire survey method, targeting university students nationwide in China. The survey instrument consists of two sections: the participants' basic demographic information and their stress-relief video consumption patterns, specifically detailing preferred content types, the number of followed creators, and post-viewing engagement behaviors. Student stress levels were evaluated using the abbreviated university student stress scale which underwent minor item adjustments following a pilot study prior to formal administration.

The survey was administered via online platforms utilizing a hybrid approach of convenience and snowball sampling, with questionnaires distributed across digital channels such as social media groups and networking feeds. To ensure sample quality, platform functions were utilized during distribution to restrict the respondent pool exclusively to university students. The collected responses were subsequently screened to exclude invalid submissions such as those with unusually short completion times. A total of 400 valid questionnaires were finally collected.

4 Results and Analysis

4.1 Descriptive Statistics of Survey Results

Sample Profile. The final sample of 400 valid responses comprised a higher proportion of females than males and a larger representation of middle-year students compared to freshmen and seniors (As shown in Table 1). The demographic distribution is attributable to the sampling methodology employed.

Table 1. Sample Distribution.

Background	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	172	43	43
	Female	228	57	100

Grade	Freshman	40	10	10
	Sophomore	109	27.3	37.3
	Junior	197	49.3	86.5
	Senior	54	13.5	100
University Type	Key Undergraduate	73	18.3	18.3
	Regular Undergraduate	295	73.8	92
	Vocational College	32	8	100
college-to-university	Yes	129	32.3	32.3
	No	271	67.8	100
Total		400	100	

Stress Sources. Ranked by selection proportion, the primary sources of stress for contemporary university students are employment and academics, followed successively by emotional, financial, and interpersonal pressures (Fig. 1).

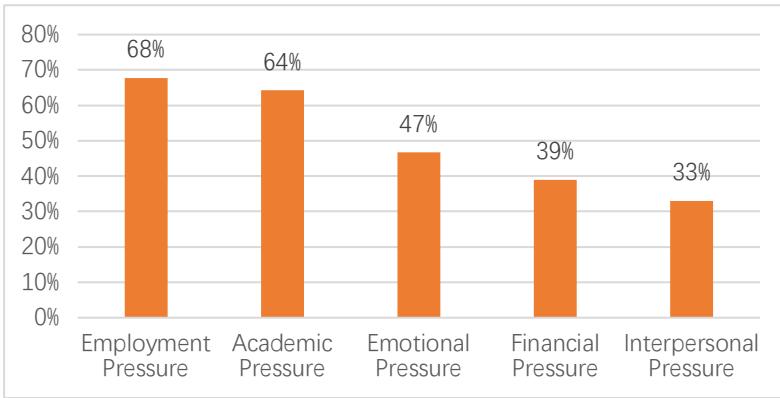


Fig. 1. Sources of college students' stress.

Current Status of Stress-Relief Video Viewing Behavior. The survey results reveal that order-based and slow-paced lifestyle videos constitute the most preferred categories of stress-relief videos, subsequently followed by destruction-oriented and ASMR content videos. The primary motivation for viewing stress-relief videos is perceived stress reduction, followed by the desire to alleviate boredom and the pursuit of novel and entertaining content. This demonstrates that students subjectively validate the videos' stress-relief effects. Most respondents follow 1-2 content creators, followed by those following zero, while 24.5% follow 3-4 creators, and only 8.25% follow 5 or more.

4.2 Hypothesis Testing

The brief university student stress scale conceptualizes stress into two dimensions: physiological responses and psychological responses. The reliability and validity evaluation results of the scale are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Parameter Estimation Results of the Measurement Model.

Concept	Indicator	Factor Loading	Cronbach's α	Composite Reliability	AVE	Fornell-Larcker Criterion
Physiological Reaction	PS1	0.802	0.871	0.906	0.659	0.812
	PS2	0.805				
	PS3	0.85				
	PS4	0.834				
	PS5	0.769				
Psychological Reaction	MS1	0.695	0.92	0.932	0.58	0.753
	MS2	0.756				
	MS3	0.753				
	MS4	0.813				
	MS5	0.766				
	MS6	0.771				
	MS7	0.826				
	MS8	0.706				
	MS9	0.758				
	MS10	0.783				

The Cronbach's α values for both latent variables are well above 0.7, indicating excellent internal consistency reliability. Composite reliabilities value all exceed 0.7. Although the factor loading for item MS1 is slightly low, the overall AVE values remain above the 0.50 threshold, and the square root of the AVE for each latent variable is greater than its correlation with other latent variables. The scale validity meets research needs and can be used for subsequent statistical analysis.

The Impact of Demographic Variables on Stress and Viewing Behavior. A chi-square test is conducted to examine the relationship between gender and sources of stress. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Chi-square Test Table for Gender and Stress Source.

Stress Type		Male	Female	X ²	P
Academic Stress	Not Selected	77	66	10.682	0.001
	Selected	95	162		
Employment Stress	Not Selected	51	78	0.933	0.334
	Selected	121	150		
Emotional Stress	Not Selected	85	128	1.779	0.182
	Selected	87	100		
Economic Stress	Not Selected	109	135	0.714	0.398
	Selected	63	93		
Interpersonal Stress	Not Selected	113	155	0.231	0.63
	Selected	59	73		

Pearson chi-square test analysis revealed significant differences between genders and academic stress, whereas no significant differences are observed regarding other

sources of stress. Females tend to excel in visual thinking and set higher academic standards for themselves, though their logical reasoning may be relatively weaker. Consequently, they may face greater challenges than males in content requiring practical application, logic, and self-directed learning. Additionally, the learning process requires significant energy expenditure; given that females generally have lower physical stamina than males, they may experience a greater sense of physiological depletion, which exacerbates academic stress. Moreover, a higher degree of psychological sensitivity in females further increases their vulnerability to perceived stress.

A chi-square test is conducted with grade and stress source. The results (As shown in Table 4) indicate that junior students experienced significantly higher employment pressure compared to students in other grades. Simultaneously, one-way ANOVA revealed significant differences across grades in the physiological response dimension of stress, whereas no significant differences were observed in the psychological response dimension.

Table 4. Chi-square Test Table for Grade and Stress Source.

Stress Type		Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	X ²	P
Academic Stress	Not Selected	14	42	68	19	0.515	0.916
	Selected	26	67	129	35		
Employment Stress	Not Selected	18	49	47	15	17.872	0
	Selected	22	60	150	39		
Emotional Stress	Not Selected	23	58	101	31	0.976	0.807
	Selected	17	51	96	23		
Economic Stress	Not Selected	26	71	119	28	2.982	0.394
	Selected	14	38	78	26		
Interpersonal Stress	Not Selected	25	80	133	30	5.604	0.133
	Selected	15	29	64	24		

The arithmetic mean of each indicator for physiological and psychological stress reactions is calculated as the measurement result for stress. An independent samples t-test is conducted with college-to-undergraduate status as factors and stress as the test variable.

Table 5. Independent Samples T-test.

Stress Dimension	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.
Physiological Reaction	0.215	0.643	4.801	366	0
Psychological Reaction	5.469	0.02	6.23	195.419	0

Statistical results (As shown in Table 5) indicate significant differences in both physiological and psycho stress responses based on college-to-undergraduate students. The stress levels of college-to-undergraduate students reporting significantly higher stress levels than regular undergraduate students. Upon transitioning to bachelor's programs, college-to-undergraduate students encounter unfamiliar environment and peers,

rigorous coursework, and intense peer competition, which collectively subject them to significantly higher stress levels than their regular undergraduate students.

Based on the above analysis, it is evident that female university students experience higher academic pressure, the junior year emerges as a peak period for employment pressure, and college-to-undergraduate students exhibit significantly higher stress than regular undergraduates. This confirms hypothesis 1(H1).

The Impact of Stress-Relief Video Viewing Behavior on Stress Level. Independent samples T-tests are conducted with post-viewing behavior as the factor and stress as the test variable, comparing the "not selected" and "selected" groups (As shown in Table 6). A negative T-value indicates that participants who exhibit the specific behavior reported higher stress levels than those who do not.

Table 6. Independent Samples T-test for Stress and Post-Viewing Behavior.

Post-Viewing Behavior	Stress Dimension	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.
Like	Physiological Reaction	3.51	0.062	-5.006	398	0
	Psychological Reaction	12.441	0	-5.266	397.971	0
Comment	Physiological Reaction	7.995	0.005	-5.112	272.089	0
	Psychological Reaction	7.205	0.008	-3.989	264.215	0
Share	Physiological Reaction	4.23	0.04	-5.447	224.735	0
	Psychological Reaction	4.759	0.03	-3.909	224.06	0
Swipe Away After Viewing	Physiological Reaction	1.648	0.2	6.446	398	0
	Psychological Reaction	2.409	0.121	5.278	398	0

University students who engaged in liking, commenting, or sharing after viewing exhibit significantly higher physiological and psychological responses than those who do not engage in these behaviors. Conversely, students who swipe away after viewing demonstrate significantly lower stress values across all measures than those who do not swipe away, thereby supporting Hypothesis 2a (H2a).

Analysis of Stress-Relief Video Viewing Frequency. An ordinal logistic regression analysis is conducted using the frequency of viewing stress-relief videos as the dependent variable, with 14 specific variables categorized under 6 main factors.

For the baseline class setting, the first option is set as the baseline. if this initial option is "other" or yielded a selection frequency of fewer than 30 cases, the second option is assigned as the reference category instead. The model yields likelihood ratio chi-square of 139.437, with a P-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.001$), indicating the model is valid. The optimized regression results are presented in Table 7:

Table 7. Ordered Logistic Regression Results for Viewing Frequency.

Independent Variable	B	P	OR	95% CI for OR	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Physiological Reaction	0.485	0.024	1.624	1.065	2.477
Male	0.5	0.044	1.649	1.013	2.683

Economic Stress	-0.723	0.005	0.485	0.295	0.8
Destruction Type	0.553	0.034	1.739	1.043	2.9
Orderliness Type	0.755	0.01	2.128	1.201	3.77
ASMR Type	0.765	0.002	2.15	1.317	3.51
1-2	1.098	0.001	2.999	1.54	5.84
3-4	2.433	0	11.399	5.278	24.615
5+	2.759	0	15.788	5.794	43.021

Physiological stress reaction has a significant impact on viewing frequency. The OR value is 1.624, meaning that for one-unit increase in physiological stress score, the odds of shifting to a higher viewing frequency category increase by 62.38%, thereby supporting Hypothesis 2b (H2b). Additionally, a significant gender difference in viewing frequency is observed, with females viewing stress-relief videos significantly more frequently than males. A higher number of followed content creators is positively associated with an increased likelihood of consuming stress-relief videos.

5 Discussion

5.1 Current Status of University Student Stress and Group Differences

The findings indicate that employment and academic pressures constitute the predominant stressors among university students, a result consistent with the currently challenging labor market and the intensely competitive climate within higher education. The survey indicate that university students exhibit pronounced psychological stress responses, underscoring the prevalence and severity of collegiate mental health challenges and the mounting demands placed on university counseling services.

The study confirms that female university students experience higher academic stress, a phenomenon potentially attributable to implicit societal expectations regarding female academic achievement, inherent psychological sensitivities, and unique challenges encountered within specific academic disciplines. The junior year represents the peak period for employment pressure, reflecting the psychological transition of students from campus to society. They begin to seriously contemplate their future while facing immediate pressure related to internships, postgraduate entrance examinations, or job seeking. As a distinct student group, college-to-university students exhibit significantly higher levels of stress than regular undergraduates. It reflects the additional psychological burden they may bear during and after the process of academic upgrading, including competitive examination preparation, academic adjustment, adaptation to a new environment, identity-related challenges, and deeper anxiety about future employment prospects. These students therefore warrant particular attention and targeted support.

5.2 The Value of Stress-Relief Videos as a Coping Mechanism

The vast majority of surveyed university students report consuming stress-relief videos, with over 60% subjectively affirming a stress-relief effect, indicating that this highly prevalent daily behavior has emerged as a crucial emotion-focused coping strategy for

stress management. A significant correlation exists between stress levels and viewing behaviors; specifically, students experiencing higher stress not only consume stress-relief videos more frequently but also demonstrate a greater propensity for active engagement with the content. For highly stressed university students, the consumption of stress-relief videos is not a random, mindless pastime, but rather a purposeful and proactive effort toward emotion regulation. Through interactive behaviors, these students strengthen their connection with the content, seeking emotional resonance and a sense of community belonging to ultimately enhance the stress-alleviating effects. Conversely, low-stress students may perceive these videos merely as casual entertainment, thus exhibiting a higher propensity to swipe past the content.

The vast majority of surveyed university students report consuming stress-relief videos, with over 60% subjectively affirming a stress-relief effect, indicating that this highly prevalent daily digital behavior has emerged as a crucial emotion-focused coping strategy for university students in stress management, which is highly consistent with Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Model of Stress and Coping. According to this classic model, individuals adopt two core coping strategies when facing stress: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. For university students, most of their core stressors are long-term and cannot be resolved in a short time. Viewing stress-relief videos becomes a typical emotion-focused coping method that they can easily access in daily life by diverting attention, obtaining vicarious control and accomplishment, and regulating negative emotions, they buffer the psychological and physiological responses caused by stress.

A significant correlation exists between stress levels and viewing behaviors; specifically, students experiencing higher stress not only consume stress-relief videos more frequently but also demonstrate a greater propensity for active engagement with the content. From the perspective of the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, for highly stressed university students, the consumption of stress-relief videos is not a random, mindless pastime, but rather a purposeful and proactive emotion regulation effort in the process of stress coping. Active interactive behaviors are not only a simple feedback on video content, but also a behavioral manifestation of high-stress students seeking emotional resonance and a sense of community belonging in the digital space. By liking and sharing, they connect with other viewers with similar stress experiences, which further amplifies the emotion-regulating effect of stress-relief videos and forms a temporary social support network in the digital context, thereby better alleviating the sense of loneliness and anxiety caused by high stress.

In contrast, combined with the Emotional Regulation Theory, low-stress students exhibit a higher propensity to swipe past the content because their stress level is low and they have no urgent need for emotion regulation targeting stress responses. For them, stress-relief videos are merely a form of casual hedonic entertainment rather than a coping strategy. Their emotional state is in a relatively stable range, and thus they do not need to invest cognitive and behavioral resources in active interaction with the video content, and only need to obtain simple sensory pleasure through passive viewing, which is consistent with the low-demand emotion regulation characteristic of individuals in a low-stress state.

This study further verifies that emotion-focused coping strategies in the new media context are manifested in distinct behavioral patterns. Specifically, the viewing of and interaction with stress-relief videos can serve as effective behavioral indicators for identifying university students' stress levels. This finding extends the applicability of the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping to the digital age and offers a novel perspective for researching how university students cope with stress in the era of ubiquitous short-video platforms.

By integrating video consumption behaviors with psychological stress theories, this study provides novel insights into the research of university students' stress and mental health. University students should cultivate a rational understanding of stress-relief videos; while these videos, serve as effective supplementary tools for rapid emotion regulation, they can not substitute for addressing the fundamental root causes of psychological stress. Higher education institutions must acknowledge emerging phenomena such as stress-relief videos, incorporating them into the discourse of mental health education to guide students in their adaptive use. Furthermore, universities should prioritize high-stress cohorts, particularly Junior and college-to-undergraduate students, by providing targeted psychological support and career guidance.

Several limitations of this study warrant consideration. First, the reliance on convenience sampling restricts the generalizability of our findings. Second, the classification of stress-relief videos is relatively broad, lacking further subdivision into more specific subtypes. Future research could address these gaps by comparing the psychological effects across more specific video sub-genres. Additionally, subsequent studies could explore the moderating role of different personality traits on these effects, as well as investigate the potential adverse consequences associated with long-term, high-frequency viewing stress-relief videos.

6 Conclusion

From a stress perspective, this study explores the intrinsic correlation between university students' stress states and their viewing behaviors of stress-relief videos. It verifies the differences in stress sources and stress levels among university students with different demographic characteristics, as well as the correlations between stress levels and university students' viewing frequency, post-viewing interactive behaviors and content preferences of stress-relief videos. The results confirm that employment stress and academic stress are the primary stress sources for contemporary university students, female students experience higher academic stress, junior students face the peak of employment stress, and college-to-university transfer students exhibit significantly stronger physiological and psychological stress responses than regular undergraduate students. Watching stress-relief videos has become a widely adopted emotional coping strategy among university students, with order-based and slow-life videos being their most preferred content types. Students with higher stress levels watch stress-relief videos more frequently and are more inclined to engage in active interactive behaviors such as liking, commenting and sharing. Physiological stress responses, gender, preferences for specific types of stress-relief videos and the number of followed content

creators are key factors influencing university students' viewing frequency of stress-relief videos.

This study enriches the empirical research related to stress-relief videos and provides quantitative evidence for their stress-alleviating effects. It verifies that watching and interacting with stress-relief videos are typical behavioral manifestations of university students' emotional coping, and offers a new perspective for the assessment of university students' psychological stress in the digital age. The research findings provide a reference for universities to carry out mental health education and stress intervention for students. Universities can take students' online video viewing and interactive behaviors as an auxiliary indicator to monitor their stress states, and conduct timely early intervention for students with abnormal viewing behaviors.

This study adopted a convenience sampling method, which limits the generalizability of the research conclusions. In addition, stress-relief videos were classified into broad categories such as order-based and destruction-type videos, with no in-depth research conducted on the stress-alleviating effects of more refined subcategories. Future research can further combine multiple research methods such as experimental psychology and in-depth interviews to explore the neural and psychological mechanisms underlying the stress-alleviating effects of stress-relief videos on psychological stress.

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