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## **An Evaluation of Coping Mechanisms Implemented by University Students to Reduce and Manage Stress**

**Background:** University students are commonly exposed to a variety of stressors throughout their academic career. The lasting impact of these stressors are widely variable and highly dependent on the effectiveness of their chosen coping mechanisms. It is vital for students to effectively manage stress as high levels of stress can negatively impact students' ability to succeed in school and overall mental health.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this literature review is to explore and evaluate evidence of the numerous coping mechanisms implemented by university students to reduce and manage stress as well as the effectiveness of such.

**Method:** A systematic review of literature was performed to evaluate studies involving stress management and coping in university students. The database, CINAHL, was searched using the inclusion terms: university students, stress and coping, and articles published in English within the past 10 years. Articles discussing uncommon stressors experienced by students and intervention studies were excluded. The articles were evaluated for research quality and critiqued collectively.

**Findings:** The initial search yielded 54 articles, however, only 27 articles met the inclusion criteria for this review, including 8 qualitative, 17 quantitative studies and 2 mixed studies. Various influences play a role in determining which coping strategies are applied. It was found that students struggle with cultural change during transition into university life. Students' existing mental health and previous traumatic experiences also significantly influenced students

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in reducing stress. Lastly, academic rigor and the demands of students' career paths, specifically athletes and healthcare students, mediated students' ability to cope and relieve stress.

**Implications:** Effective stress management is a critical skill that can aid university students in balancing the pressures of school and overall mental wellbeing. Coping mechanisms and their influences can be very complex and are not distinct nor universally applicable to every individual.