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**STRATEGIES FOR COPING WITH
PSYCHOLOGICAL STRESS
ENTREPRENEURS
- A FIELD STUDY ON A SAMPLE OF
ALGERIAN ENTREPRENEURS -**
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ABSTRACT

Psychological stress is considered one of the most significant challenges faced by individuals in various areas of life, especially in entrepreneurship, which requires a high capacity for adaptation and decision-making, in this context the current study aimed to reveal the level of strategies for coping with psychological stress among entrepreneurs, in addition to showing the most used methods among sample members. Based on the descriptive approach appropriate to the nature of the subject, the Brief-Coping (1997) scale of strategies for coping with psychological stress was used, as it was applied to a cross-sectional sample estimated at (30) individuals from Algerian entrepreneurs. After analyzing the data, using statistical methods: frequencies, arithmetic means, standard deviations, and percentages, we reached results indicating the existence of an average level of strategies for coping with psychological stress, in addition to entrepreneurs' reliance on adaptive methods to manage psychological stress such as planning, positive reinterpretation, acceptance, active coping style, and searching for procedural social support, and their distancing from non-adaptive methods: psychological materials, denial, and behavioral withdrawal.

Keywords: Psychological stress, entrepreneurs, strategies for coping with psychological stress.

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INTRODUCTION:

The world has recently witnessed rapid changes that included various aspects of life, including those that affected the technological field and the tremendous development it saw, in addition to the transformations and changes that the social and political field witnessed, and perhaps the most prominent of them are the economic transformations that greatly affected the lives of individuals and societies, especially after the health crisis that the world witnessed - the Corona crisis - and its long-term economic effects that led to disruptions in global markets and financial crises in the labor market and a significant decline in the economies of countries as a result of quarantine on air, land and sea areas, despite countries' attempts to address the crisis and develop plans to control it, it brought with it unprecedented challenges and crises at the individual and societal levels, the most prominent of which was the high level of psychological pressures and negative effects on the mental health of individuals, due to the impact it left on job stability and the disruption that affected job opportunities, which created in individuals a feeling of job insecurity and fear of dismissal and dismissal from work, anxiety about the financial future and low economic stability in addition to high unemployment rates, which caused these psychological pressures to worsen, and researchers considered stressful situations related to the economy to have the most impact on the mental health of individuals, because they It makes him resort to building renewed behavioral, value and social models that are consistent with the requirements of the era, and all of this makes the individual in constant anxiety and psychological stress (Abdullah, 2020, p. 409). In the same context, scientists and researchers consider the instability of the economic system and economic and financial problems to be among the most significant sources of psychological pressure (Jumaa, 2007, p. 16).

The "term psychological stress", according to Ali (2000), refers to a series of external events the individual faces as a result of dealings with the surrounding environment, which imposes on him need for rapid adaptation their his confrontation with these events to avoid negative psychological and social effects and achieve harmony. (Ali .2000, p. 86).

Both Watkins and Mayer see it as a broad concept that describes the individual's challenge with the environment and the factors underlying the pressure, which leads him to try to adapt and adapt to the environment, or try to escape and withdraw to avoid these pressures. (Pargament, 1997, p. 208)

To avoid and reduce the effects of negative psychological stress on individuals and institutions, countries, companies, and individuals have rushed to find quick practical solutions and search for models to reduce the severity of the crisis. Perhaps the most prominent of these solutions is the emergence of pioneering projects and entrepreneurship, where entrepreneurs played a fundamental role in providing innovative economic solutions to adapt to the new reality on the scene. On the technological level, digital transformation and e-commerce, thanks to electronic platforms, played an important role in creating new job opportunities. Remote work communication applications and delivery services that have become a daily necessity during quarantine periods, not to mention distance education and health platforms, have also helped to mitigate the severity of the crisis thanks to the initiatives undertaken by entrepreneurs.

According to Hisrich & Others (2005), an entrepreneur is a person who has psychological, social, and administrative skills in addition to characteristics and qualities, including taking the initiative, and he also works on Solving social and economic requirements and can request resources and various equipment to make something of value, to provide something new and innovative. (Kharboutli, 2018, p. 9).

Orthan and Scott (2001) confirm that the entrepreneur is the one who makes an economic contribution by creating jobs.

The entrepreneur is one of the most important distinguished and effective human elements in society thanks to the precedence in innovating and completing new projects to address his problems and the problems of his society and providing services to meet his requirements and the requirements of society to which he belongs, to develop his country's economy and address social problems.

However, the field of entrepreneurship is not without new challenges that may increase the severity of psychological pressures on entrepreneurs as a result of the daily challenges and changes in the labor market and their entrepreneurial projects, from financial pressures resulting from financing, and uncertainty about the success or failure of the project, which may lead to a decrease in their level of confidence and self-esteem and increased levels of anxiety and stress due to increased psychological and physical stress. In a study by (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2020, pp. 741-763) to find out the psychological stress faced by entrepreneurs, it was concluded that they face pressures resulting from financial uncertainty, fear of failure, and intense work pressures. The same study also indicated that their level of psychological stress is high, especially in the early stages of establishing projects, which is due to several factors,

including fear of failure and pressures related to financing. In another study (Hmieleski & Carr, 2008, pp. 604-618) conducted to identify their levels of psychological stress, its results concluded that the level of psychological stress ranges from medium to high.

To reduce the severity of pressures and restore psychosocial harmony and balance, which is one of the biggest challenges facing entrepreneurs to ensure continuity and success in their projects, whether on a personal level or to achieve economic growth and recovery, they resort to employing special coping methods to reduce the severity and intensity of psychological stress and manage them well. The concept of coping strategies with psychological stress refers to the process of confronting requirements (internal and external) that the individual estimates as stressful, costly, or draining his resources and resources. The coping process consists of efforts - whether psychological or behavioral - that attempt to manage, overcome, endure, reduce, and minimize environmental and internal requirements and conflicts that arise between these internal and external requirements. Some view coping with pressures as a series of interactions between the individual and his resources, values, obligations, and the specific environment, including its resources, requirements, and restrictions. Accordingly, coping styles refer to a set of responses that occur over time, through which the individual affects the surrounding environment and is affected by it. (Taylor, 1999, pp. 204-205)

Lazarus and Folkman (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) divide coping or confrontation strategies into two types, the first of which is coping focused on the problem (Coping Focused Problem) and coping focused on emotion (Coping Focused Emotion). Although the latter may be used sometimes and may be useful (temporarily), the first (focused on the problem) is considered more effective. What is meant by coping focused on emotion is that the individual is preoccupied with his psychological state as a result of the pressure (or pressures) to which he was exposed without paying attention to the source or cause of this pressure. To identify the most commonly used methods of coping with psychological stress, a study was conducted by (Uy & Foo, 2013, pp. 241-252) that included a sample of entrepreneurs.

The results showed that entrepreneurs use coping strategies based on planning and social support to alleviate the severity of the stress they face. In addition, (Stephan & Gorgievski, 2016, pp. 1-15) concluded in their study that

entrepreneurs follow coping strategies based on problem-solving, strategic planning, and creative thinking.

In light of what was presented and to achieve the objectives of the study, the following questions were raised:

- What is the level of coping strategies for psychological stress among entrepreneurs (high, medium, or low)?
- What are the most frequently used and recurring strategies for coping with psychological stress among entrepreneurs?

Hypotheses:

Null Hypothesis (H₀₁): Entrepreneurs do not have a high level of coping strategies for psychological stress (i.e., their level is low or medium).

Alternative Hypothesis (H₁₁): Entrepreneurs have a high level of coping strategies for psychological stress.

Null Hypothesis (H₀₂): Adaptive coping strategies such as religious coping, active coping, seeking procedural social support, planning, and positive reinterpretation are not the most frequently used methods among entrepreneurs.

Alternative Hypothesis (H₁₂): Adaptive coping strategies such as religious coping, active coping, seeking procedural social support, planning, and positive reinterpretation are the most frequently used methods among entrepreneurs.

Importance of the study:

Entrepreneurship is considered one of the most important fields related to economic prosperity and development, due to the ability of entrepreneurs to address societal problems through new ideas and innovations. During our study, we shed light on entrepreneurs from the psychosocial aspect by knowing the level of their employment of strategies for coping with psychological stress, in addition to knowing the most commonly used methods for them in the face of the new challenges imposed on them by their projects, to develop a plan or develop training programs and outline guidance and awareness programs to improve the performance of entrepreneurs and enhance their ability to succeed in facing challenges and adapt to stressful situations.

Research objectives:

Through this study, we aim to reveal the level of strategies for coping with psychological stress, whether it is low, medium, or high, in addition to knowing the most frequently used methods of strategies for psychological stress among entrepreneurs.

Operational Definitions:

Psychological stress:

Definition of Sobhi Abdel Fattah Al-Kafouri (2000):

It is the process of evaluating the events that the individual faces as threatening situations and responding to them through physiological, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral changes that reveal the individual's inability to reconcile his capabilities with the actions required by the surrounding environment.(Taibi, 2016, p. 70). It refers to the way the mind and body respond to external and internal requirements that may exceed the individual's ability to accept and adapt to them.

Strategies for coping with psychological stress:

(Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989, pp. 267-283)Definition:

These are the efforts made by the individual in facing situations and events. They are a set of activities or plans through which the individual seeks to deal with stressful situations to solve them or reduce their effects.(Al-Sulaiman, 2011, p. 2)

The concept of coping strategies according to (Bernard & Neila, 2017)refers to cognitive reactions such as re-evaluating the situation to deal with it, emotional reactions such as expressing or suppressing tension, anger, and fear, and behavioral reactions such as solving problems and seeking help, and physical reactions during our response to any internal or external event that we feel is a threat, to control its effects on our mental and physical health.

Operational definition:

The term stress coping strategies, from the point of view of the researchers in the current study, refers to the methods, approaches, and techniques that include cognitive processes and behavioral activities that entrepreneurs resort to deal with stressful situations during their interactions with their environment to get rid of psychological distress and tension and achieve adaptation to those situations. It is operationally represented in the total degree to which entrepreneurs respond on the Brief-Coping scale of Carver (1997) with its adaptive dimensions (active confrontation, procedural support, planning, acceptance, emotional support, humor, positive reinterpretation, religion) and its maladaptive dimensions (behavioral distancing, denial, mental distraction, self-punishment, use of psychoactive substances, expression of emotions).

Entrepreneurs:

The term entrepreneur according to (Kuratko & Hodgetts, 2008) includes every individual who establishes a new project characterized by a spirit of adventure and initiative, facing different forms of ambiguity and risk. They are individuals who can discover opportunities and mobilize the various resources needed for the project, such as time, money, and effort, and then make appropriate decisions to transform the idea into a project.

In the current study, the term entrepreneur refers to every individual who has a project that he manages and has his methods of dealing with it to adapt to new changes in society, employing his mental, psychological, and financial resources in order to seize opportunities and create a new entrepreneurial project.

Study Methodology:

The method is defined as an investigation of a psychological and social phenomenon as it is in the present, to diagnose it, reveal its aspects, determine the relationship between its elements, and find the relationship between it and other phenomena related to it. In this study, we relied on the descriptive approach, because it is suitable for psychological research, and it is also concerned with studying the current conditions of phenomena in terms of their characteristics, relationships, and the factors influencing them. Jaber Abdul Hamid defines the descriptive approach as: "The approach that is based on describing what exists and interpreting it based on determining the circumstances and relationships existing between the facts studied. It is also concerned with determining the practices, rumors, trends, and tendencies prevailing among individuals and groups, then seeks to interpret and analyze them to extract conclusions from them that are significant for the problem studied."(Malhi, 1990, p. 133).

Study sample and its characteristics:

The sample:

The current study was conducted on a cross-sectional sample consisting of (30) entrepreneurs, distributed according to the following characteristics:

Table (1): Shows the characteristics of the study sample according to the gender variable

Gender	Frequency	Percentages
Males	19	63%
Females	11	37%
Total	30	100%

The largest percentage of the sample members is males at 63%, and the remaining percentage estimated at 37% is for females.

Study tools:

Brief Coping Orientation for problem experience scale

We relied in our study on the brief coping styles scale of Carver (Charles S. Carver (1997, translated and reviewed from English to Arabic by professors from the University of Algiers 2 (Professor Boutamin Samir, Ali Toudart, and Professor GharbiHouria). (Kharshi, 2019, p. 200).

The psychometric characteristics of the study conducted by the researcher Professor Kharchi Asia during the year (2019) were adopted, as she calculated the validity of internal consistency by calculating the correlation between the scores of the items and the total score of the dimensions to which they belong and calculating the correlation between the dimensions and the total score of the scale. It was shown through the correlation coefficients between the scores of the items and the dimensions to which they belong in the coping styles scale that they have significant Statistics at level (0.01).

While most of the correlation coefficients between the dimensions' scores and the total score of the scale were significant at level (0.01), which ranged between (0.279 and 0.552).

The results of Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the coping styles scale were equal to (0.749), while the stability coefficients for the dimensions ranged between (0.433) and (0.739), and thus it can be said that the scale has high stability. (Kharshi, 2019, pp. 209-210).

Method of correcting the scale:

The answers to the scale items are corrected according to the four-point Likert scale shown in the following table:

Table (2): Shows the scoring scale for the psychological stress coping strategies scale

Alternatives	I always do it	I sometimes do it	I rarely do it	I never do it
Degrees	4	3	2	1

(Murtaza & Naqqi Haider, 2012, p. 3)

Statistical methods used:

After retrieving the distributed questionnaires and sorting them, we unpacked them, then analyzed and processed them using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences for the program (SPSS, 26). We adopted the following statistical methods:

- Frequencies, arithmetic means, standard deviations, and percentages.

Presentation and analysis of the study results:

Presentation, analysis, and discussion of the results of the first hypothesis:

Table (3): Shows the level of strategies for coping with psychological stress

Level	Low	Medium	High
Range	49-28	76-50	107-77

Table (4): Represents the results of the level of strategies for coping with psychological stress among entrepreneurs:

Sample	M	S	Mini	Maxi
30	76,9333	10,34886	55,00	94,00

The results of the table show us that compared to the arithmetic mean of the respondents' score on the coping strategies scale, estimated at 76.9333, it falls within the range (50-76), which means that the level of styles used by entrepreneurs is average.

The standard deviation value = (10.34), which reflects a clear variation and explains the difference between entrepreneurs in the level of styles.

As for the minimum and maximum values that ranged between (55 94), they confirmed the clear distinction in the use of strategies, as some use styles at low levels, which may cause them to be exposed to high levels of pressure and psychological stress, while it increases among the rest of the entrepreneurs and may be due to experience in the field and continuous training.

The results of our study differed from the study (Frese, 1999, pp. 379-404), which concluded that the high ability to deal with psychological stress plays an important role in the success of entrepreneurial projects, and it also indicated that entrepreneurs who possess a high level of effective strategies are more able to adapt and manage projects effectively.

It also differed from the findings of the study (Baron, 2008, pp. 328-340), which confirmed that entrepreneurs' resorting to employing adaptive coping methods frequently is closely related to achieving success and continuity in entrepreneurial projects and businesses.

In the same context, the study (Folkman & Lazarus, 1984) indicated that entrepreneurs face psychological stress daily, which increases their levels of psychological stress due to the nature of their work, which requires them to employ high levels of methods and strategies to confront and overcome them. It also emphasized the role of the individual's personality and the nature of psychological pressures in the effectiveness of the methods used.

This disparity and variation in the levels of strategies employed by entrepreneurs the difference between the highest and lowest values and the lack of consistency and equivalence in the methods employed can be explained by the fact that they use some strategies but not in an ideal way and may be due to several factors, as individual differences and differences in psychological organization and personal experience, psychological and social resources,

personality patterns and traits, in addition to the type of social relationships play a role in the existence of differences in their levels.

Experience in the field of entrepreneurship and continuous training may also play an important role in raising the levels of employing strategies, in addition to the difference associated with the nature and type of the project that may cause a difference in levels, as projects that require high pressure, such as start-ups in the technical field, may contribute to employing highly adaptive methods than other projects, such as the active approach and planning.

Presentation, analysis, and discussion of the results of the second hypothesis:

Table (5): shows the level of dimensions of the coping strategies entrepreneurs

Dimensions of coping strategies	Sample	M	S	Mini	Maxi	Variation
Active dealing	30	6.4000	1.67332	2.00	8.00	2.800
Planning	30	6.6000	1.45270	3.00	8.00	2.110
Seek procedural social support	30	6.0000	1.28654	3.00	8.00	1.655
Seek social-emotional support	30	4.9333	1.85571	2.00	8.00	3.444
Expressing emotions	30	4.7000	1.55696	2.00	8.00	2.424
Behavioral withdrawal	30	4.3333	1.86313	2.00	8.00	3.471
Absentmindedness and mental distancing	30	5.6333	1.40156	2.00	8.00	1.964
Self-punishment	30	5.6333	1.95613	2.00	8.00	3.826
Positive reinterpretation	30	6.5667	1.56873	2.00	8.00	2.461
Humor	30	4.5000	1.38340	2.00	7.00	1.914
Acceptance	30	6.5333	1.65536	2.00	8.00	2.740
Denial	30	5.0000	1.14421	2.00	8.00	2.000
Religion	30	7.1000	1.44676	3.00	8.00	2.093
Use of psychological substances	30	3.0000	2.01717	2.00	8.00	4.069

The table shows that the most commonly used coping strategies among entrepreneurs is the religious style with an average of 7.1000, followed by the planning style, positive reinterpretation, acceptance, active coping style, and searching for procedural social support with close averages ranging between 6.6000 and 6.0000, followed by the styles of distraction, mental distancing, punishment, and denial with averages ranging between 5.6333 and 5.0000, then come the strategies: searching for emotional social support, expressing emotions, behavioral withdrawal, and humor, all close in terms of averages ranging between 4.9333 and 4.5000, and finally comes the strategy of using psychological substances with an average of 3.0000.

The results of our study regarding entrepreneurs' use of adaptive strategies such as religious-based coping styles are consistent with the study by Koenig (Koenig, King, & Carson, 2012), which concluded that religiosity helps in adapting to new challenges and reduces the rate of depression and anxiety. In the same context, Pargament (1997) indicated that individuals who resort to religion when exposed to psychological stress and pressures enjoy balanced psychological health. This was also confirmed by Al-Essa's study (2000), which concluded that religion plays a role in influencing the mental and psychological makeup of the individual and encouraging the individual to adopt socially acceptable ideas and behaviors that help him improve his mental health and enhance his ability to confront pressures. (Kharshi, 2019, p. 10)

Commenting on the results obtained, which concluded that the most commonly used strategy of coping among entrepreneurs is religion, and based on the specificity of Algerian society, which is known for its adherence to religious teachings and its resort to religious practices such as prayer and contemplation, which strengthen the sense of reassurance and the ability to confront and control daily pressures, many studies have also proven that religion has a close relationship with the individual's mental health, as it protects against psychological and physical disorders. Entrepreneurs resorting to planning methods, positive reinterpretation, acceptance, active coping style, and seeking procedural social support are results that are consistent with the nature and environment of entrepreneurship, which calls for intensifying professional communication networks to improve and make their entrepreneurial projects successful, in addition to strengthening social relations, as individuals who receive support from their environment and reinforcement from society demonstrate a greater ability to confront and adapt to crises.

In support of the results, planning is a common method that reflects the importance of organization to avoid falling into tension and anxiety. Effective and advanced planning is an important strategy that enables entrepreneurs to

make good use of time, control it, and make sound decisions, in addition to improving their job performance. The results obtained were consistent with the results of studies by Carver, Scheier & Weintraub (1989), House (1981), and (Frese, Toward a psychology of entrepreneurship-an action Theory perspective, 2009, pp. 437-496). This supports the research hypothesis that entrepreneur's resort to using adaptive and positive coping methods when facing psychological pressures.

The fact that entrepreneurs rarely resort to relying on maladaptive methods such as resorting to the use of psychoactive substances, denial, and behavioral withdrawal explains their awareness of the importance of facing the challenges of daily and professional life instead of denying and evading them. Awareness of the dangers of psychoactive substances as a mechanism and method for dealing with crises and psychological stress and pressures also plays an important role in their not relying on it due to the decline in job performance it may cause, in addition to the increase in addiction rates, which may constitute an obstacle to success and achieving profits in their entrepreneurial projects.

Conclusion:

The use of coping strategies by entrepreneurs that allow them to manage psychological stress and pressures during social and work interactions is considered one of the most important factors that help them move forward and achieve success in their projects, as their acquisition of it is considered a factor of strength and a tool through which the entrepreneur regains his balance and adaptation to achieve growth and development in his work environment.

The results of our study concluded that:

The findings of the current study revealed that entrepreneurs demonstrate an average level of coping strategies when dealing with psychological stress. Despite this moderate level, the most frequently employed coping strategies were identified as adaptive, including the use of religious practices, planning, positive reinterpretation and acceptance, active coping, and seeking procedural social support. These methods indicate a tendency among entrepreneurs to adopt constructive approaches in managing work-related stress and pressures.

In light of these results, several recommendations can be proposed to support the development of more effective coping mechanisms among entrepreneurs. First, it is essential to develop targeted training programs aimed at strengthening adaptive and positive coping styles. These programs should focus on enhancing problem-solving skills, encouraging the expression of

emotions, and promoting both emotional and procedural social support. Such interventions would contribute to building more positive interpersonal relationships with colleagues and competitors, while also fostering emotional resilience and social connectivity—critical factors for success in challenging entrepreneurial environments.

Moreover, enhancing psychosocial support systems within entrepreneurial ecosystems can play a vital role in helping individuals better manage stress and improve overall psychological well-being. Providing accessible psychological support services and peer mentoring opportunities may further aid in this process.

Finally, the study recommends conducting future research from alternative analytical perspectives, incorporating variables such as age, years of professional experience, and educational background. Exploring how these factors interact with coping strategies—particularly about gender differences—may provide deeper insights and more targeted strategies for supporting entrepreneurs in diverse contexts.

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