



**The Impact of Time Management Stress, Academic Stress, and
Employment Stress on Life Balance among Undergraduate Law
Students: A Case Study of East China Jiaotong University**

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**AN INDEPENDENT STUDY SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
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Requirements for the Degree of Master of Business Administration

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This study aimed to investigate the impact of time management stress, academic stress, and employment stress on life balance of undergraduate law students. As law students are required to manage intensive learning tasks while preparing for future professional development, they are exposed to multiple sources of stress that may disrupt their ability to maintain balance across academic, personal, and social domains. Guided by Stress-Coping Theory and Life Balance Theory, this study aimed to explore the independent and combined effects of these three types of stress on students' perceived life balance.

A quantitative research design was employed. Data were collected through a structured self-administered questionnaire distributed to undergraduate students in the School of Law at East China Jiaotong University. A total of 212 questionnaires were distributed, and 198 valid responses were retained for analysis after data screening. The questionnaire measured time management stress, academic stress, employment stress, and life balance using multi-item scales. Reliability and validity analyses were conducted to ensure the measurement quality of the instrument, followed by descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis.

The results indicate that undergraduate law students generally experience noticeable levels of time management stress, academic stress, and employment stress, while their perceived life balance remains relatively limited. Correlation analysis reveals that all three types of stress are significantly associated with lower levels of life balance. Further regression analysis demonstrates that time management stress, academic stress, and employment stress each exert a significant and independent negative effect on life balance. Among the three stressors, time management stress

shows the strongest influence, suggesting that difficulties in organizing and allocating time play a central role in shaping students' overall balance of life. The conclusion of life balance among law students are not solely individual issues but reflect broader educational and developmental demands. From a practical perspective, universities should strengthen students' time management skills, adopt more balanced academic arrangements, and provide systematic employment guidance to help reduce stress and promote sustainable life balance. This study contributes to a clearer understanding of stress mechanisms in legal education and offers empirical evidence to support student development policies and educational practice improvements.

Keywords: time management stress, academic stress, employment stress, life balance, law students



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HUANG LIHANG

DECLARATION

I, HUANG LIHANG, hereby declare that this Independent Study entitled “The Impact of Time Management Stress, Academic Stress, and Employment Stress on Life Balance among Undergraduate Law Students: A Case Study of East China Jiaotong University” is an original work and has never been submitted to any academic institution for a degree.

(HUANG LIHANG)

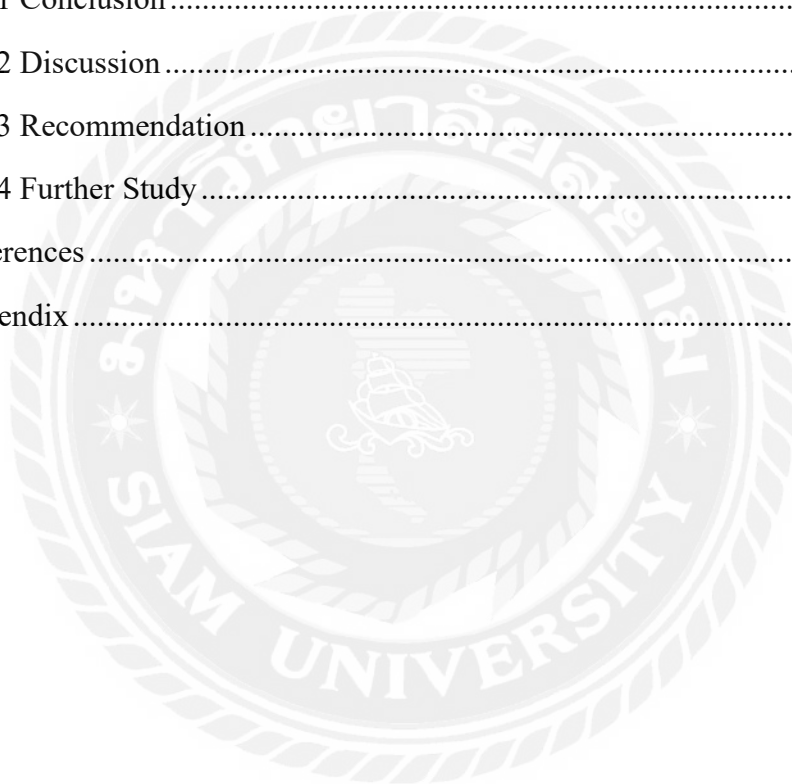
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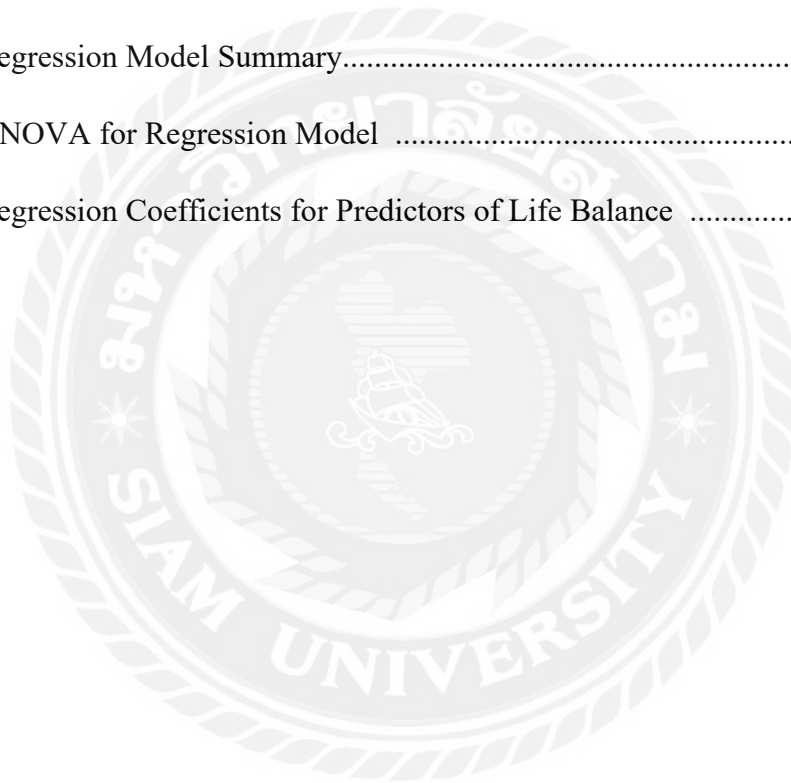
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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

With the rapid development of society and the continuous deepening of educational reform, contemporary university students are confronted with increasingly diverse types of pressure, alongside a steady escalation in its intensity. Heightened academic expectations, intensified employment competition, and growing self-expectations for personal development collectively render pressure a critical factor affecting students' physical and mental well-being, behavioral performance, and overall quality of life. Pressure is not only derived from external contexts, but also manifests as a subjective psychological experience when students cope with academic tasks, time allocation, and future career planning. As higher education shifts from a knowledge-transmission model toward competency-oriented talent training, effectively identifying, understanding, and managing student pressure has become an essential challenge in university administration and talent cultivation.

For law students in particular, the pressure they experience exhibits distinct disciplinary characteristics. The legal knowledge system is extensive, legal reasoning is rigorous, and professional practice—such as case interpretation, legal application, and statutory analysis—requires precision and a high level of cognitive engagement. Meanwhile, qualifying examinations for legal professions and civil service positions impose stringent entry thresholds. Consequently, law students are consistently exposed to demanding academic and professional expectations. Within this context, three specific types of pressure stand out:

First, time management stress, arising from the substantial investment required in reading statutes, analyzing judicial cases, participating in moot court sessions, and completing academic writing tasks, often forced students into difficult choices between learning activities and personal life arrangements;

Second, academic stress, stemming from the abstract nature and high theoretical demands of core legal courses such as Civil Law, Criminal Law, and

Administrative Law, imposes sustained cognitive burdens on students as they comprehend, internalize, and apply complex legal concepts;

Third, employment stress is triggered by the expanding number of law graduates, intensified competition for traditional legal occupations such as lawyers, judges, and prosecutors, and evolving competency demands for emerging positions in compliance, corporate governance, and legal risk management. As a result, students experience employment-related anxiety and anticipatory stress from the early stages of their academic journey.

These pressures not only affect students' psychological states and academic performance but can also disrupt their life balance. When students compress sleep, leisure, and social interactions to cope with academic requirements, examination preparation, and internship competition, their daily rhythm becomes unbalanced. Such imbalance may lead to insufficient rest, emotional fluctuations, interpersonal alienation, and even psychological issues such as anxiety and depression. If unmanaged, these conditions may exert long-term negative effects on students' self-efficacy, career decisions, and developmental trajectories.

Although existing research has explored pressure and life balance among university students, most studies either focus on general stress levels or examine pressure from a single dimension. Few studies have systematically analyzed the structural origins of time management stress, academic stress, and employment stress, nor have they investigated how these pressures jointly influence life balance within the context of legal education. In particular, students in regional universities demonstrate unique pressure-perception patterns due to differences in institutional resources, career pathways, and professional expectations—yet this group has received limited empirical attention.

In response to these gaps, this study took undergraduate students from the School of Law at East China Jiaotong University as the research population and focused on three core types of pressure to examine their mechanisms of influence and relational pathways toward life balance. The findings of this study are expected to enrich theoretical discussions in the domains of legal education and university mental health research, while providing empirical evidence for improving curriculum design, teaching support, psychological counseling, and

employment guidance. Ultimately, this research contributes to helping students scientifically manage pressure, achieve dynamic balance between academic pursuits and personal life, and enhance the quality of legal talent cultivation along with the holistic development of university students.

1.2 Questions of the Study

This study focused on undergraduate law students at East China Jiaotong University and investigated how different types of stress influence their overall life balance. Among the multiple pressures encountered during legal education, time management stress, academic stress, and employment stress represent three major sources that significantly affect students' academic performance, daily routines, and psychological well-being. To clarify the mechanisms through which these pressures shape life balance, the study addressed the following core research questions:

- 1.How does time management stress influence life balance of law students?
- 2.How does academic stress influence life balance of law students?
- 3.How does employment stress influence life balance of law students?

By exploring these questions, the study aimed to examine the pathways through which various stressors operate within legal education and reveal their impacts on students' life arrangements, emotional states, and long-term development. The findings are expected to provide theoretical and practical support for enhancing curriculum design, academic counseling, and career development services in higher education.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to systematically examine the mechanisms through which three types of stress—time management stress, academic stress, and employment stress — affect life balance of law students. As legal education increasingly emphasizes in-depth knowledge acquisition, rigorous legal reasoning, and career development competencies, law students are exposed to multiple stressors throughout their learning process. Time management stress arises when students

struggle to allocate limited time resources across demanding academic tasks, intensive reading requirements, and extracurricular engagements, which may disrupt their daily routines and influence their physical and psychological well-being. Academic stress originates from the abstract nature of legal theories, the intensive logical reasoning required in legal coursework, and the stringent assessment standards, collectively generating cognitive and emotional burdens that can diminish students' learning behaviors, academic performance, and quality of life. Employment stress derives from the intensified competition in the legal job market, the rising threshold of professional qualification examinations, and the uncertainty associated with career expectations, leading to sustained psychological pressure that affects students' lifestyle arrangements, future planning, and mental health.

These pressures interact and jointly shape students' learning patterns, life habits, and emotional states, thereby influencing their overall life balance. Accordingly, this study conducted empirical analyses to identify the pathways and magnitude of these effects, aiming to uncover the internal logic through which different stress factors influence life balance.

1.To analyze the effect of time management stress on life balance of law students.

2.To analyze the effect of academic stress on life balance of law students.

3.To analyze the effect of employment stress on life balance of law students.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study focused on examining how time management stress, academic stress, and employment stress affect the life balance of students at the Law School of East China Jiao tong University. Specifically, the research centered on three core dimensions of stress: time management stress, reflecting difficulties in allocating limited time resources between academic tasks and personal activities; academic stress, stemming from the demanding nature of legal coursework, intensive reading requirements, and rigorous assessment standards; and employment stress, arising from intensified competition in the legal job market, high professional qualification thresholds, and uncertainty regarding future career

prospects.

The study investigated how these stressors manifest, how they interact with students' psychological and behavioral responses, and how they collectively influence their overall life balance. The research was confined to currently enrolled undergraduate law students, and the data represented their subjective perceptions, lived experiences, and coping patterns within the specific institutional and cultural environment of East China Jiaotong University. Variables beyond the three defined stress dimensions, such as family background, personality traits, or long-term mental health history, were not included as primary analytical factors in this study.

By narrowing the scope to these three types of stress, the study aimed to ensure conceptual clarity, analytical coherence, and contextual relevance, thereby enabling the empirical findings to meaningfully contribute to the understanding of stress dynamics in legal education and offering insights for policy development, academic support, and student well-being enhancement.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study holds significant theoretical and practical value by examining how three types of stress — time management stress, academic stress, and employment stress — affect the life balance of law students. Theoretically, the study advances existing research by moving beyond the traditional view of student stress as a single construct and instead establishes a multidimensional stress framework tailored to the legal education context. This approach enables a more nuanced understanding of how different stressors originate and interact to influence students' daily functioning. Moreover, by positioning life balance as a key outcome variable, the study broadens the scope of psychological and educational research related to law students and addresses a gap in current studies on stress mechanisms within legal education. Practically, the findings can assist universities in accurately identifying the major sources of stress among law students and provide empirical support for optimizing curriculum design, moderating academic workload, enhancing employment guidance, and improving psychological support services. The results also offer actionable insights for strengthening students' stress management, time allocation, and career planning.

abilities, ultimately helping them maintain a stable balance between academic responsibilities and personal well-being. By highlighting the importance of life balance in legal talent cultivation, this study contributes to improving the quality of legal education and supports the development of well-rounded legal professionals who possess both specialized knowledge and sustainable growth capacity.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

The primary limitation of this study lies in the homogeneity of its sample. This research focused exclusively on undergraduate students from the Law School of East China Jiaotong University, a population characterized by institution-specific academic structures, professional expectations, and campus environments. While the findings provide meaningful insights into the stress experiences and life balance patterns of this particular group, the conclusions may not be directly generalizable to students in other universities, disciplines, or educational contexts.

Different institutions vary significantly in terms of curriculum rigor, faculty resources, academic culture, and the extent of employment support systems, all of which may influence students' stress perceptions and coping behaviors. For example, elite law schools may impose higher academic standards and foster more competitive career trajectories, resulting in different stress levels and life balance dynamics compared to regional universities. Similarly, institutions that emphasize practical training or provide extensive career counseling may mitigate certain types of stress, meaning that students' experiences of academic or employment pressure could be substantially different.

Moreover, the nature of legal studies—its emphasis on abstract reasoning, case analysis, and professional qualification—creates stressors that are not necessarily present in other disciplines. Students in fields such as engineering, medicine, or business may encounter different academic challenges, career expectations, and social pressures, making the stress–life balance relationships observed in this study are unlikely to mirror those of other student populations without empirical validation.

Additionally, contextual factors such as regional socioeconomic conditions, institutional development goals, and the demographic composition of the student body may further shape stress dynamics and lifestyle patterns, increasing the contextual dependency of this study's findings. Therefore, although the research contributes valuable insights into law students' stress mechanisms, its conclusions should be interpreted with caution when extending beyond the current sample. Future studies are encouraged to incorporate multi-institutional or cross-disciplinary comparisons to enhance the external validity and broader applicability of the findings.

This study employed survey design and relied on self-reported questionnaire data collected at a single time point. Therefore, the correlation and regression findings should be interpreted as statistical associations relationships rather than causal effects. It is also possible that common method variance or unmeasured factors (e.g., personality traits, family context, baseline mental health) may partially explain the observed relationships.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

To ensure conceptual clarity and consistency, the key terms used in this study are defined as follows:

1. Time Management Stress

Time management stress refers to the psychological pressure experienced by students when they are unable to effectively allocate limited time resources to academic tasks, personal activities, and extracurricular engagements.

2. Academic Stress

Academic stress refers to the cognitive and emotional burden caused by demanding legal coursework, heavy academic workload, and rigorous assessment standards.

3. Employment Stress

Employment stress refers to the psychological pressure arising from competitive legal job markets, qualification examinations, and uncertainties in

future career development.

4. Life Balance

Life balance refers to a student's ability to maintain a stable and healthy distribution of time, energy, and emotional resources across academic tasks, personal activities, and social relationships. In this study, life balance is measured through students' selfevaluations of their daily routines, rest, emotional well-being, and overall satisfaction with life.

5. Stress

Stress is defined as the psychological and physiological response to demands that exceed an individual's coping capacity (Lazarus & Folkman,). In this context, stress is measured through students' subjective reporting of tension, fatigue, worry, and perceived inability to manage academic or personal challenges.

6. Stress-Coping

Stress-Coping refers to the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral methods individuals adopt to manage, reduce, or adapt to stressful situations.

7. Law students

Law students in this study refer specifically to undergraduate students enrolled in the Law School of East China Jiaotong University. All definitions and measurements in this study apply exclusively to this population.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Before examining how time management stress, academic stress, and employment stress influence the life balance of law students, it is essential to establish a theoretical foundation that explains how stress forms and how it affects individuals' daily functioning. This section integrates two theoretical perspectives—Stress–Coping Theory and Life Balance Theory—to clarify the mechanisms through which external pressures shape psychological outcomes and influence students' quality of life. On this basis, the following sections review relevant empirical studies on stress among university and law students, examine the relationships between specific stress dimensions and life balance, and elaborate the theoretical mechanisms through which stress may disrupt students' daily functioning. These theoretical perspectives also provide the conceptual grounding for the development of the research hypotheses and the proposed analytical model.

2.2 Literature Review

2.2.1 Stress among University Students and Law Students

Stress has long been recognized as a prominent issue in higher education. University students are frequently exposed to multiple pressures, including academic demands, time constraints, interpersonal expectations, and concerns about future careers. High levels of stress are closely linked to anxiety, depression, reduced academic efficiency, and lower subjective well-being (Misra & McKean, 2000).

Within this general context, law students have been identified as a particularly high-risk group for psychological stress. Legal education is characterized by extensive reading loads, abstract theoretical reasoning, complex case analysis, and highly competitive assessments (Benjamin et al., 1986). Consequently, law students experience elevated levels of academic stress, performance anxiety, and burnout. Furthermore, uncertainties associated with future legal careers — such as the competitiveness of legal professional qualification examinations and limited high-quality employment opportunities—

intensify employment stress, making it difficult for law students to maintain a balanced daily life.

Stress has long been recognized as a prominent issue in higher education. University students are frequently exposed to multiple pressures, including academic demands, time constraints, interpersonal expectations, and concerns about future careers. Extensive empirical evidence indicates that high levels of stress are closely associated with anxiety, depression, reduced academic efficiency, and lower subjective well-being (Misra & McKean, 2000; Pascoe et al., 2020). A systematic review by (Dyrbye et al., 2006) further demonstrated that prolonged academic stress significantly increases the risk of emotional exhaustion and psychological distress among students in demanding professional programs.

Within this general context, law students have been identified as a particularly high-risk group for experiencing elevated psychological stress. Legal education is characterized by extensive reading loads, abstract theoretical reasoning, complex case analysis, and highly competitive assessment systems, all of which impose substantial cognitive and emotional demands (Benjamin et al., 1986). Longitudinal evidence suggests that psychological distress among law students tends to intensify over the course of their studies, with anxiety, depressive symptoms, and burnout becoming increasingly prevalent as academic pressure accumulates (Levecque et al., 2017).

Moreover, uncertainties associated with future legal careers—such as the competitiveness of national professional qualification examinations, civil service recruitment, and limited access to high-quality legal positions — further exacerbate students' stress experiences. Research on career-related stress indicates that heightened employment competition and perceived career uncertainty are strongly linked to emotional strain, reduced self-efficacy, and diminished well-being among university students (Rossier et al., 2012). Consequently, law students often confront the combined pressures of intensive academic workload and future career insecurity, which jointly contribute to elevated stress levels and make it increasingly difficult to maintain a balanced daily life.

2.2.2 Time Management Stress and Life Balance

Time management is a crucial self-regulatory competence in autonomous learning environments. It involves coordinating academic tasks, extracurricular activities, internships, and social engagements. Macan et al. (1990) demonstrated that ineffective time management is significantly associated with higher perceived stress, procrastination, and poorer academic outcomes. Similar findings were reported by Britton and Tesser (1991), who showed that students with poor time management skills tend to experience lower academic performance and higher levels of academic strain. When students struggle to plan tasks, prioritize responsibilities, or allocate adequate time for study, time management stress increases, leading to ongoing feelings of having “insufficient time” (Claessens et al., 2007).

Ineffective time management not only undermines academic performance but also disrupts life balance. Misra and McKean (2000) reported that students who constantly rush through academic demands tend to sacrifice rest, exercise, leisure, and social interaction, resulting in fatigue and reduced life satisfaction. Häfner and Stock (2010) further found that deficits in time planning and goal setting are closely associated with emotional exhaustion and reduced well-being. Conversely, effective time management—such as breaking tasks into manageable units, setting realistic study schedules, and balancing study and relaxation—supports emotional stability and a more sustainable lifestyle (Macan et al., 1990; Claessens et al., 2007).

In legal education, demanding requirements such as case reading, moot court participation, and legal research make time allocation particularly challenging. However, systematic quantitative analyses of time management stress and its relationship with life balance among Chinese law students remain scarce, signifying an important gap this study aims to address.

2.2.3 Academic Stress and Life Balance

Academic stress refers to the psychological strain students experience when academic expectations are perceived to exceed their competence, time, and available coping resources (Friedman & Bendas-Jacob, 2007; Reddy et al., 2018).

In legal education, students are required to master abstract legal concepts, interpret complex statutes, and engage in rigorous logical reasoning and legal writing tasks, all of which impose substantial cognitive and emotional demands. Early empirical evidence indicates that psychological distress among law students escalates throughout their academic training, with anxiety and depressive symptoms closely associated with the intensity of coursework and evaluation pressure (Benjamin et al., 1986).

When academic requirements are appraised as overwhelming, students are more likely to adopt maladaptive learning behaviors, such as surface learning, avoidance, and procrastination (Tinto, 1993). Although these strategies may temporarily reduce perceived tension, they often impair deep learning, weaken academic self-efficacy, and further intensify examination pressure in the long run (Zajacova et al., 2005). A substantial body of research has linked high levels of academic stress to sleep disturbances, negative emotional states, and reduced life satisfaction, indicating that sustained academic pressure undermines both psychological well-being and daily functioning (Misra & McKean, 2000; Beiter et al., 2015).

Recent empirical studies provide robust evidence for the negative association between academic stress and students' mental health and life balance. For example, Barbayannis et al. (2022) identified a strong negative correlation between perceived academic stress and mental well-being among university students, showing that higher academic pressure is accompanied by lower levels of psychological health. Similarly, Pérez-Jorge et al. (2025) demonstrated that academic stress, particularly when intensified by large-scale disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic, significantly predicted declines in psychological well-being, sleep quality, and everyday functioning.

In the Chinese higher education context, exam-oriented assessment systems, concentrated testing periods, and heavy course loads objectively intensify academic pressure and reduce the time available for rest, leisure, and social interaction (Reddy et al., 2018). For law students, whose studies involve extensive reading, case analysis, and high-stakes examinations, academic demands frequently encroach upon personal and recovery time, thereby disrupting the balance between study, health, and social life. These findings

collectively suggest that academic stress constitutes a central risk factor for impaired life balance among undergraduate law students and should be examined as a key explanatory variable in the present study.

2.2.4 Employment Stress and Life Balance

In higher education, employment stress derives from competition in the labor market, professional qualification examinations, and societal expectations regarding career success. For law students, these pressures are particularly salient, as they must prepare for highly competitive national bar examinations, civil service recruitment, and selection processes for positions in courts, law firms, and corporate legal departments. High examination difficulty, strict recruitment criteria, and uncertain employment prospects generate sustained stress and career-related anxiety (Rossier et al., 2012; Tomlinson, 2017).

Empirical studies indicate that prolonged career uncertainty and perceived competition are strongly associated with deteriorations in mental health, including increased anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and reduced self-efficacy. (Ciarrochi et al., 2002) found that uncertainty regarding future outcomes and intense social comparison significantly predict psychological distress and helplessness. Similarly, Koen et al.(2012) reported that low perceived employability and unclear career prospects are linked to heightened stress and reduced psychological well-being among university students.

In response to employment pressure, law students often devote substantial time and energy to internships, professional training, and extracurricular credential accumulation in order to enhance their competitiveness. While such investments may improve employability, they simultaneously reduce opportunities for rest, leisure, and social interaction, thereby limiting emotional recovery and disrupting life balance (Creed et al., 2015). Persistent engagement in career preparation activities under conditions of uncertainty may therefore contribute to chronic stress and burnout.

Employment stress is further intensified by family expectations and societal norms that associate legal careers with high achievement and social status. The tension between future-oriented career investment and the maintenance of present

well-being places law students under continuous psychological strain, undermining emotional stability and sustainable life balance (Rossier et al., 2012; Tomlinson, 2017). Accordingly, employment stress constitutes a significant risk factor for impaired life balance among undergraduate law students and warrants systematic empirical investigation in the present study.

2.2.5 Life Balance among University Students

Life balance refers to an individual's subjective perception of maintaining coherent and manageable participation across diverse life domains, including study, social interaction, leisure, and physical and emotional well-being (Matuska & Christiansen, 2008; Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007; Sirgy & Wu, 2009). In university contexts, it is reflected in students' ability to coordinate academic responsibilities with personal needs and recovery activities. Empirical research has shown that balanced engagement across life roles is positively associated with psychological well-being, life satisfaction, and sustainable functioning (Hobson & Delunas, 2001; Sirgy & Wu, 2009). When demands from academic or career preparation overshadow other life areas, imbalance manifests through fatigue, reduced satisfaction, and deteriorating psychological health, as well as increased risk of burnout and emotional exhaustion (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007).

2.3 Theoretical Review

2.3.1 Stress–Coping Theory

Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Stress–Coping Theory conceptualizes stress as a dynamic process emerging from interactions between the individual and the environment. The theory posits that stress results not only from objective external demands but also from cognitive appraisal, which involves evaluating how threatening a situation is and assessing whether one possesses adequate coping resources. When individuals perceive that environmental demands exceed their abilities, skills, or time resources, they are more likely to experience heightened stress responses.

In the context of this study, time management stress, academic stress, and employment stress constitute the primary stressors law students encounter. When students appraise academic workloads, time constraints, or employment

expectations as overwhelming and perceive their coping capacity, such as available time, academic competence, or career preparedness, as insufficient, they are more likely to experience anxiety, tension, and emotional exhaustion. Under such circumstances, students may resort to maladaptive coping strategies, including procrastination, avoidance, rumination, or emotional venting. These reactions disrupt their daily routines, reduce opportunities for rest and self-regulation, and ultimately impair their life balance. Thus, stress – coping theory provides a meaningful lens through which to explain the mechanism linking different stressors to variations in life balance among law students.

Stress–Coping theory conceptualizes stress as a dynamic process emerging from interactions between the individual and the environment. The theory posits that stress results not only from objective external demands but also from cognitive appraisal, which involves evaluating how threatening a situation is and assessing whether one possesses adequate coping resources. Subsequent theoretical developments have further emphasized that individuals’ primary and secondary appraisals jointly determine emotional responses and coping patterns (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004; Lazarus, 2006). When individuals perceive that environmental demands exceed their abilities, skills, or time resources, they are more likely to experience heightened stress responses, such as anxiety, tension, and emotional exhaustion (Compas et al., 2001).

In the context of this study, time management stress, academic stress, and employment stress constitute the primary stressors law students encounter. When students appraise academic workloads, time constraints, or employment expectations as overwhelming and perceive their coping capacity, such as available time, academic competence, or career preparedness, as insufficient, they are more likely to experience psychological strain and emotional fatigue (Compas et al., 2001). Under such circumstances, students may resort to maladaptive coping strategies, including procrastination, avoidance, rumination, or emotional venting, which have been shown to be associated with poorer emotional regulation and reduced psychological well-being (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). These reactions disrupt daily routines, limit opportunities for rest and self-regulation, and weaken effective role functioning, thereby undermining individuals’ capacity to maintain balance across life domains

(Lazarus, 2006). Accordingly, stress–coping theory provides a robust conceptual framework for explaining the psychological mechanisms through which multiple stressors influence law students’ life balance.

2.3.2 Life Balance Theory

Life Balance Theory emphasizes the coordination of multiple life domains and the overall quality of daily activity patterns. Matuska and Christiansen (2008) argued that life balance is not a literal equal allocation of time across roles but a subjective perception that one’s significant life roles and needs, such as academic engagement, personal interests, social relationships, and emotional well-being, receive sufficient attention and support, resulting in a coherent, meaningful, and sustainable lifestyle. Subsequent research has further conceptualized life balance as the harmonious integration of work or study, leisure, social participation, and self-care, which is closely associated with psychological well-being and life satisfaction (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007; Wagman et al., 2012).

Applied to university students, the theory suggests that maintaining equilibrium among learning demands, rest, social participation, and self-development is crucial for long-term well-being (Sirgy & Wu, 2009). When stressors such as time management pressure, academic challenges, and employment expectations accumulate beyond an individual’s coping capacity, the resulting strain disrupts daily rhythms, reduces opportunities for recovery, and weakens engagement in non-academic life roles (Wagman et al., 2012). Over time, this imbalance compromises psychological health, diminishes life satisfaction, and systematically undermines perceived life balance (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007; Sirgy & Wu, 2009). Accordingly, Life Balance Theory provides a valuable framework for explaining how sustained stress exposure may erode students’ capacity to maintain a sustainable and satisfying pattern of daily functioning.

2.4 Research Relevance

The relevance of this study lies in its focus on understanding how multiple forms of stress, namely, time management stress, academic stress, and

employment stress, collectively shape the life balance of law students, a topic that remains insufficiently examined in current research. While previous studies have demonstrated that university students frequently experience academic and career-related stress, most research has treated these pressures independently rather than analyzing their combined effects on students' well-being. In the context of legal education, where rigorous academic expectations and competitive employment pathways coexist, stress is not only more intense but also more multidimensional. However, existing literature seldom integrates these distinct stress dimensions into a unified analytical model, resulting in a limited understanding of how stress accumulation disrupts students' daily rhythms and overall life balance.

This study addresses these gaps by applying Stress–Coping Theory and Life Balance Theory to explore the mechanisms by which stressors influence life balance among law students. By linking specific types of stress with students' psychological appraisals, coping responses, and behavioral adjustments, this research advances the conceptual understanding of how pressures evolve and interact within legal education environments. Furthermore, in light of increasing concerns about mental health issues among Chinese university students, examining how stress affects life balance has practical importance for improving student support systems, curriculum design, and career development programs. Thus, the study contributes both theoretically and practically by offering insights into how universities can enhance students' well-being and foster sustainable academic and professional development.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

Hypotheses derived from the conceptual framework are as follows:

H1: Time management stress has a significant negative effect on life balance of undergraduate law students.

H2: Academic stress has a significant negative effect on life balance of undergraduate law students.

H3: Employment-related stress has a significant negative effect on life balance of undergraduate law students.

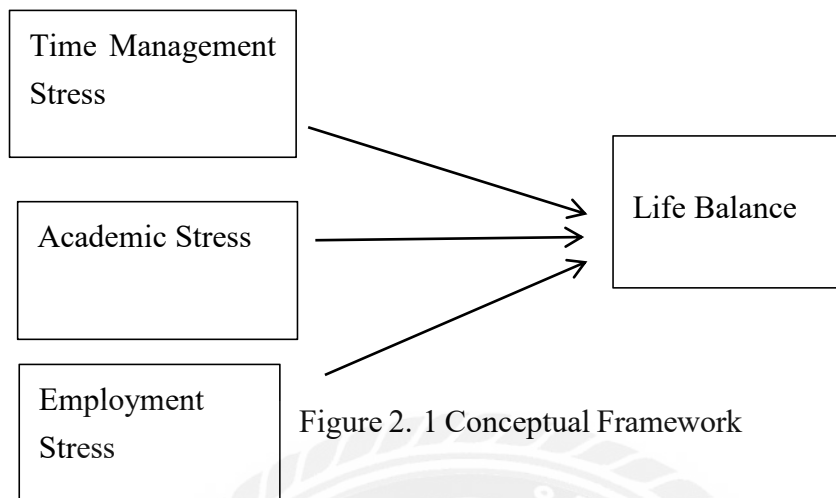


Figure 2. 1 Conceptual Framework



Chapter 3 Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology employed to examine the relationships among time management stress, academic stress, employment stress, and life balance among undergraduate law students at East China Jiaotong University. It first introduces the quantitative research design adopted in this study and explains the development of a structured questionnaire used to measure the independent and dependent variables. The chapter then clarifies the formulation of research hypotheses, identifies the research population, and describes the sampling strategy and determination of sample size.

Subsequently, the procedures for data collection and the step-by-step data analysis are presented, including descriptive statistics, reliability and validity testing, and inferential statistical analyses. Finally, this chapter outlines the evaluation of the reliability and validity of the measurement instrument to ensure that the scales used are scientifically sound and appropriate for addressing the research questions of this study.

3.2 Research Design

3.2.1 Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative survey design. A quantitative approach was chosen for three main reasons. First, the research objectives focus on testing the relationships among measurable variables, namely, three types of stress and life balance, and therefore require the use of inferential statistics. Second, quantitative methods allow standardized data collection from a relatively large sample, which supports more reliable comparisons and enables generalization within the population of law students. The aim of building a generalizable understanding of how different stressors affect students' life balance (see also Al Khatib, 2014; Zhang & Zheng, 2017).

A structured self-administered questionnaire was used as the primary data collection instrument. All substantive items adopted a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree). This format ensures consistency in respondents' answers, reduces interpretation bias, and facilitates efficient data coding and statistical analysis.

Data were collected at a single period of measurement. This enabled the study to capture the existing conditions of time management stress, academic stress, employment stress, and life balance among the target population, rather than examining how these constructs develop or change over time.

3.2.2 Measurement of Independent and Dependent Variables

In this study, Time Management Stress, Academic Stress, and Employment Stress are treated as independent variables, while Life Balance is treated as the dependent variable. All variables were measured using a structured questionnaire, and the specific measurement items are presented in Table 3.1. A 5-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” was used for all items.

Time Management Stress was measured by items reflecting students' perceived difficulties in planning, prioritizing, and allocating time across academic and personal activities. Academic Stress was measured using items that capture students' perceived pressure related to their academic experience. Employment Stress was measured through items assessing students' stress perceptions associated with future employment and career-related concerns.

Life Balance was measured using items that assess students' perceived ability to maintain a reasonable and sustainable balance across different life domains, including study, rest, social interaction, and personal activities.

All measurement items were adapted from established scales in previous studies and revised to fit the context of undergraduate legal education in China. The items were written in clear and concise language to ensure comprehensibility for law undergraduates. This measurement approach provided a sound empirical basis for subsequent reliability and validity analyses.

Table 3.1 Measurement Items

Variable	Item	Serial Number
Time Management Stress	I struggle to reasonably plan the time allocation between academic and personal affairs.	Q1
	When facing multiple tasks, I cannot clearly determine priorities.	Q2
	I often feel stressed due to task accumulation caused by procrastination.	Q3
	It is difficult for me to reserve sufficient time for learning tasks such as reading and review.	Q4
	I have trouble balancing the time for study, rest, and social activities.	Q5
	I feel that my time efficiency in handling daily affairs is relatively low.	Q6
Academic Stress	The abstract theories of core law courses (e.g., Civil and Commercial Law, Criminal Law) cause me stress.	Q7
	The required reading load of courses (legal provisions, cases, academic literature) is too heavy to complete.	Q8
	The high requirement for logical reasoning ability in case analysis tasks makes me feel strenuous.	Q9
	The course assessment standards (e.g., exam difficulty, thesis requirements) are relatively strict.	Q10
	I need to spend a lot of time to understand the complex concepts and rules in courses.	Q11
	I feel overwhelmed when dealing with multiple high-difficulty courses simultaneously.	Q12
	The time arrangement for course assignments and exams is relatively tight, causing great stress.	Q13
Employment Stress	The intensity of competition for jobs in the legal industry makes me feel anxious.	Q14
	Professional access thresholds such as the bar exam and civil service exam bring me great pressure.	Q15
	I worry that my academic background and abilities are difficult to make me stand out in job hunting.	Q16

Variable	Item	Serial Number
	The employment expectations of society and family for law graduates make me feel burdened.	Q17
	The requirement for practical experience in positions such as corporate legal counsel and law firm roles causes me stress.	Q18
	The increase in the number of law graduates makes me worried about my future employment prospects.	Q19
	The performance of peers in internships and job hunting makes me feel competitive pressure.	Q20
Life Balance	I can reasonably allocate time for study and rest to avoid overwork.	Q21
	I have sufficient time to participate in social activities and maintain good interpersonal relationships.	Q22
	I can balance academic tasks and personal hobbies.	Q23
	My daily life rhythm is stable, and my schedule will not be disrupted by stress.	Q24
	I can maintain emotional stability during busy study and rarely experience anxiety or irritability.	Q25
	I am satisfied with my current state of balancing study and life.	Q26
	I have time to accompany family or friends to meet emotional needs.	Q27
	Even when facing pressure, I can ensure a certain amount of leisure time to relax.	Q28

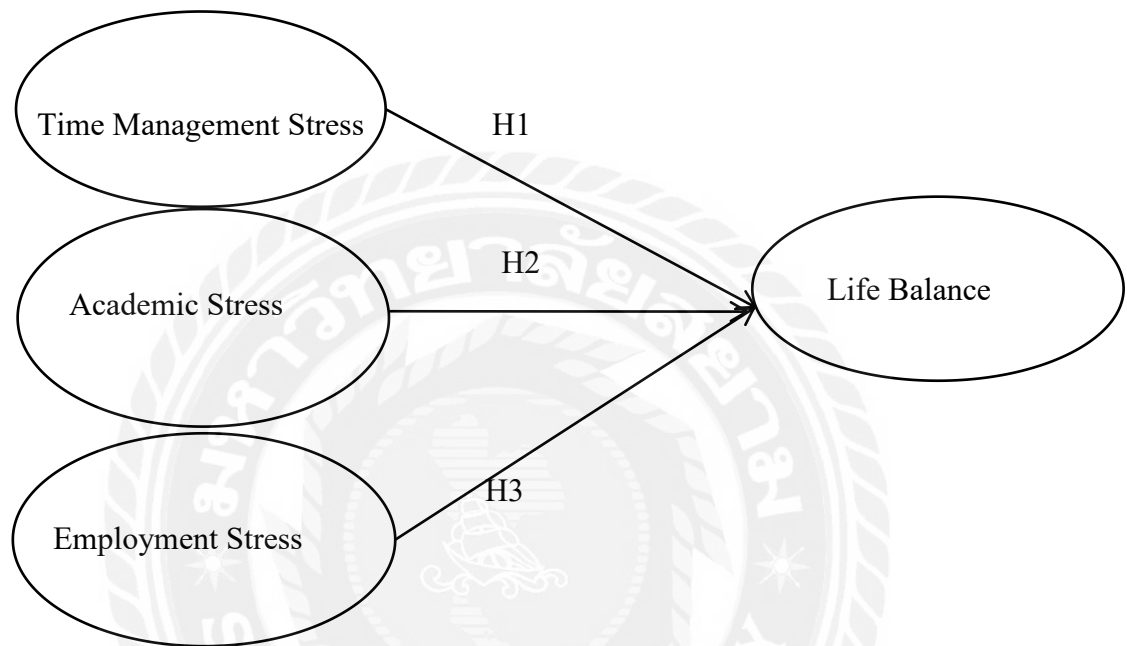
3.3 Hypothesis

H1: Time Management Stress has a significant negative effect on students' Life Balance.

H2: Academic Stress has a significant negative effect on students' Life Balance.

H3: Employment Stress has a significant negative effect on students' Life Balance.

Figure 3.1 Hypothetical Model of Stress and Life Balance



3.4 Population and Sampling

3.4.1 Research Population

The target population of this study consisted of all undergraduate students enrolled in the School of Law at East China Jiaotong University during the 2023–2024 academic year. These students studied at the main campus in Nanchang and were distributed across four academic levels: freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior. According to official enrollment records, the total population comprises 521 students.

The population is relatively homogeneous in terms of academic discipline (law) and institutional environment, which makes it suitable for examining how time management stress, academic stress, and employment stress influence the

life balance of law undergraduates.

3.4.2 Sampling Method

This study employed purposive sampling combined with convenience sampling. Two channels were used to administer the questionnaire:

Onsite distribution: With the assistance of course instructors, paper-based questionnaires were distributed during class breaks to students from different grades and classes. This ensured proportional coverage across all four academic levels and reduced the likelihood of sampling only particular course types or specific cohorts.

Online distribution: An electronic version of the questionnaire was created using the “Wenjuanxing” online survey platform. The survey link and corresponding QR code were disseminated through class WeChat groups to reach students who were not physically present during onsite sessions and to increase the overall response rate.

Participation was entirely voluntary and anonymous. Before completing the questionnaire, students were informed of the research purpose and assured that their responses would be used exclusively for academic analysis. They were also told that they had the right to withdraw from the survey at any time without any consequences.

While convenience sampling may introduce potential selection bias, such as overrepresenting easily accessible respondents and affecting the generalizability of the findings, the questionnaire distribution strategy covered students across all grades and classes within the Law School to enhance representativeness. Nonetheless, caution should be exercised when extending the results to other institutions or academic contexts.

3.5 Sample Size

The required sample size was determined using two complementary criteria:

Rule of thumb for regression analysis: According to commonly cited guidelines, regression analysis generally requires 30 respondents per predictor .

With three independent variables (time management stress, academic stress, employment stress) and one dependent variable (life balance), the minimum recommended sample size was approximately 200 respondents.

Adjustment for population size and potential invalid responses: The target population consisted of 521 students, and an initial target sample size of 200 was considered sufficient to provide stable estimates. Taking into account that questionnaire surveys frequently encounter invalid or incomplete responses (e.g., 15–20% non-usable rate), setting a target of 200 respondents helped ensure that the final valid sample still exceeded the minimum requirement.

3.6 Data Collection

Data collection was conducted among undergraduate law students at East China Jiaotong University during the spring semester of the 2023–2024 academic year, over approximately two weeks (March 1–15, 2024).

The structured questionnaire (28 substantive items plus demographic items) was administered in both paper-based and online formats, as described in Section 3.4.2. For the online survey, participants were required to check an “agree” box on the first screen to confirm informed consent; for the paper-based survey, participants signed a written consent form before filling out the questionnaire. The informed consent statement explained:

the research purpose;

the voluntary nature of participation;

the anonymity and confidentiality of responses; and

the absence of any academic or administrative consequences for non-participation.

In practice, a total of 212 questionnaires were returned. After screening for completeness and consistency (e.g., removal of missing data and patterned responses), 198 questionnaires were retained as valid, yielding a valid response rate of 93.4%. This final sample size provides adequate statistical power for the planned analyses.

Completed paper questionnaires were collected immediately after completion, and online responses were automatically recorded by the Wenjuanxing platform. The data were then exported into SPSS 25.0 for subsequent analysis. The details of the data collection process are summarized in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Data Collection Results

Data Collection Item	Detail
Collection period	March 1–15, 2024
Instrument	Structured questionnaire (28 items)
Distribution method	Onsite and Online (Wenjuanxing)
Total returned	212
Valid responses	198
Valid response rate	93.4%
Notes	Participation was voluntary and anonymous

3.7 Data Analysis

All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS 25.0. The data analysis followed a stepwise procedure aligned with the research objectives and hypotheses.

3.7.1 Data screening and preparation

Prior to substantive analysis, the following steps were taken: checking for missing values, outliers, and inconsistent response patterns; ensuring that all items were correctly coded in the same direction (higher scores indicating higher levels of stress or better life balance, as appropriate); and inspecting distributions of item scores to identify any obvious data entry errors.

3.7.2 Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics were computed to provide an overview of the sample characteristics and the general level of stress and life balance: frequencies and percentages for demographic variables (gender, grade); means and standard deviations for the four core variables (time management stress, academic stress, employment stress, and life balance). These descriptive results are reported in detail in Chapter 4.

3.7.3 Reliability analysis

Reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's α to assess the internal consistency of each scale (time management stress, academic stress, employment stress, and life balance), as well as the overall questionnaire. A Cronbach's α value of 0.70 or above was considered acceptable for this study. Reliability results for both the pilot test and the formal sample are summarized in Section 3.8.

3.7.4 Validity analysis

Validity was examined from two aspects: content validity and construct validity. Content validity was evaluated through expert review and calculation of the Content Validity Index (CVI). Construct validity was examined using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), including the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure, Bartlett's test of sphericity, and factor extraction with rotation. Detailed procedures and results are reported in Section 3.8.

3.7.5 Inferential statistics

To test the research hypotheses (H1–H3), the following inferential analyses were conducted: Pearson correlation analysis to examine the bi-variate relationships between each stress dimension (time management stress, academic stress, and employment stress) and life balance, as well as the intercorrelations among the stress variables, and multiple linear regression analysis to assess the independent predictive effects of the three stress variables on life balance and to test whether time management stress, academic stress, and employment stress each have a significant negative impact on life balance.

Before conducting the multiple regression analysis, the core assumptions of

linear regression — normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and absence of multicollinearity—were examined using standard diagnostic tools (e.g., residual plots, normality tests, and variance inflation factors). The diagnostics indicated that the data met the assumptions required for linear regression.

In all hypothesis testing procedures, a two-tailed significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ was adopted. Detailed descriptive statistics, correlation coefficients, and regression results are presented in Chapter 4.

3.8 Reliability and Validity Analysis of the Scale

This section presents the reliability and validity of the measurement scales used in the study, based on both a pilot test and the formal sample.

3.8.1 Reliability Analysis

Internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's α coefficient. A pilot test was first conducted in December 2023 with 30 undergraduate law students from the School of Law at East China Jiaotong University (the same target population as the formal study), to examine the clarity and reliability of the items. The pilot results showed that:

Table 3.3 Reliability Analysis Results

Measurement Dimension	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Time Management Stress	6	0.78
Academic Stress	7	0.82
Employment Stress	7	0.80
Life Balance	8	0.79

All values exceeded the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70, indicating acceptable to good internal consistency. Based on feedback from the pilot test, minor wording adjustments were made to improve item clarity (e.g., Q3 and Q18), while retaining the original meaning.

Using the formal sample ($N = 198$), Cronbach's α was recalculated. The overall questionnaire showed $\alpha = 0.86$, further confirming the high internal consistency of the instrument. Scale-level reliability indices are summarized in Table 3.3.

3.8.2 Validity Analysis

The validity of the measurement scales in this study was examined from two aspects: content validity and construct validity.

(1) Content Validity

To assess content validity, two professors specializing in legal education and one associate professor in developmental psychology were invited to conduct an expert evaluation of the questionnaire items. Using a five-point rating scale (1 = very irrelevant, 5 = very relevant), the experts independently rated the relevance of each item to the corresponding construct as well as the clarity of item wording.

The results indicate that all items achieved an item-level Content Validity Index (I-CVI) of no less than 0.80, and the scale-level Content Validity Index (S-CVI) for the overall instrument was 0.89. These findings suggest a high level of expert agreement that the questionnaire items adequately and accurately represent the core constructs of Time Management Stress, Academic Stress, Employment Stress, and Life Balance, thereby demonstrating satisfactory content validity.

(2) Construct Validity

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted on the 28 formal measurement items. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.83, indicating that the data were suitable for factor analysis.

Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 1246.32$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that the correlation matrix was not an identity matrix and that factor analysis was appropriate.

Principal component analysis with Varimax rotation was employed for factor extraction. Based on the criteria of eigenvalues greater than 1 and the scree plot inflection point, four factors were extracted, which are highly consistent with the four theoretical constructs proposed in the research framework (Time Management Stress, Academic Stress, Employment Stress, and Life Balance). The cumulative variance explained by the four factors was 68.3%. All items demonstrated factor loadings of 0.61 or above on their respective factors, with no substantial cross-loadings, indicating good construct validity.

It should be noted that separate exploratory factor analyses (EFAs) were not conducted for each subscale. The KMO value and Bartlett's test statistics reported in Table 3.3 were derived from the EFA of the overall 28-item scale. The repetition of these values across subscale rows is solely for table completeness and does not represent independent construct validity analyses for each subscale.

A summary of reliability and selected validity indices for each measurement dimension is presented in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 Validity Analysis Results

Measurement Dimension	Number of Items	KMO Value (Factor Analysis Suitability)	Bartlett's Sphericity Test (χ^2)	Bartlett's Sphericity Test (pvalue)	Factor Loading Range	Content Validity Index (SCVI)
Time Management Stress	6	0.83	1246.32	< 0.001	0.62–0.79	0.89
Academic Stress	7	0.83	1246.32	< 0.001	0.65–0.81	0.89
Employment Stress	7	0.83	1246.32	< 0.001	0.63–0.77	0.89
Life Balance	8	0.83	1246.32	< 0.001	0.61–0.78	0.89
Overall Questionnaire	28	0.83	1246.32	< 0.001	—	0.89

The KMO value and Bartlett's test statistics (χ^2 , pvalue) were derived from the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) of the overall 28 item scale (no separate EFA was conducted for each subscale). These values are repeated in each subscale row only for the completeness of the table format, and they do not represent independent analysis results of individual subscales.

Chapter 4 Findings and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the empirical results of the study on the relationships between time management stress, academic stress, employment stress, and life balance among undergraduate law students at East China Jiaotong University. Based on the reliable and valid measurement scales reported in Chapter 3, data from 198 valid questionnaires were subjected to a series of statistical analyses using SPSS 25.0.

Following the research design, the analysis proceeded in three main steps. First, descriptive statistics were used to summarize the sample characteristics and the overall levels of the four core variables. Second, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the bivariate relationships between each type of stress and life balance, as well as the intercorrelations among the stress variables. Finally, multiple linear regression analysis was employed to test the three hypotheses (H1–H3), evaluating the independent predictive effects of time management stress, academic stress, and employment stress on life balance.

4.2 Descriptive Statistical Analysis Results

4.2.1 Sample Demographic Characteristics

A total of 198 valid questionnaires were included as the sample for statistical analysis in this study. Overall, the sample exhibits good representativeness and balance in terms of demographic characteristics.

In terms of gender distribution, the number of male and female respondents is roughly equal (98 males and 100 females), with a basically balanced gender ratio. This helps avoid the impact of gender structure bias on the extrapolation of statistical results.

Regarding grade distribution, the sample covers students from freshman to senior year: 51 freshmen, 48 sophomores, 49 juniors, and 50 seniors, with similar proportions across all grade levels. This relatively balanced grade structure

allows the study to comprehensively reflect the overall status of stress perception and life balance among undergraduate law students at different learning stages, rather than being limited to a specific grade.

Overall, the demographic distribution of the sample is reasonable and consistent with the actual student structure of the Law School at East China Jiaotong University, providing a reliable basis for the subsequent analysis.

4.2.2 Descriptive Statistics of Core Variables

Table 4.1 presents the means and standard deviations of the four core variables: time management stress, academic stress, employment stress, and life balance. All variables were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

Table 4.1 Descriptive Statistics of Variables (N = 198)

Variable	Mean	SD
Time Management Stress	3.48	0.72
Academic Stress	3.39	0.74
Employment Stress	3.32	0.71
Life Balance	3.05	0.68

For ease of interpretation, Table 4.1 reports the mean scores (1–5) of each construct. From Table 4.1, several observations can be made:

Stress levels: All three stress variables show mean scores above the theoretical midpoint of 3.00, indicating that students generally experience moderate to high levels of time management stress, academic stress, and employment stress. Time management stress is slightly higher than the other two, suggesting that difficulties in arranging and allocating time are particularly

salient among law students.

Life balance level: The mean score of life balance is 3.05, slightly above the midpoint. This indicates that many students struggle to maintain a satisfactory balance among study, rest, social interaction, and personal interests, aligning with the high workload and pressure characteristics of legal education.

4.3 Correlation Analysis Results

Pearson product–moment correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between the three stress variables and life balance, as well as the intercorrelations among the stress variables. The results are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Pearson Correlation between Variables (N = 198)

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Time Management Stress	1			
2. Academic Stress	0.58**	1		
3. Employment Stress	0.52**	0.61**	1	
4. Life Balance	-0.54**	-0.50**	-0.48**	1

Note. ** $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed). Higher scores on the Life Balance scale indicate a higher level of perceived life balance.

Key Findings:

(1) Relationships between stress and life balance

All three stress variables show significant negative correlations with life balance:

Time Management Stress is significantly negatively correlated with life balance ($r = -0.54$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that students who experience greater

difficulty in planning, prioritizing, and allocating time tend to report poorer life balance.

Academic Stress is significantly negatively correlated with life balance ($r = -0.50, p < 0.01$), indicating that heavier academic demands and more challenging legal coursework disrupt students' ability to maintain a well-balanced lifestyle.

Employment Stress also exhibits a significant negative correlation with life balance ($r = -0.48, p < 0.01$), implying that heightened concerns about employment prospects, career competition, and professional qualification requirements negatively affect students' capacity to sustain life balance.

These results provide empirical support for all three hypotheses (H1–H3), demonstrating that higher stress levels are associated with lower levels of life balance among undergraduate law students.

(2) Interrelationships among stress variables

The three stress variables are moderately and positively correlated with each other (ranging from 0.52 to 0.61, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that time management difficulties, academic challenges, and employment-related pressure tend to co-occur and mutually reinforce one another. For example, demanding coursework may intensify time management problems, while employment-related uncertainty may heighten academic and personal stress simultaneously.

(3) Multicollinearity assessment

Although moderate correlations exist among the stress variables, all coefficients are below the conventional multicollinearity threshold of 0.70. Additionally, variance inflation factor (VIF) values were all below 3, indicating that multicollinearity is not a threat. Therefore, all three stress variables can be included simultaneously in the subsequent regression model.

4.4 Multiple Regression Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

To further examine the independent contribution of each stress dimension to life balance and to formally test the three hypotheses, a multiple linear regression analysis was performed. Life Balance was entered as the dependent variable, while Time Management Stress, Academic Stress, and Employment Stress served as the independent variables. For regression analysis, Life Balance and the three stress constructs were entered as composite total scores obtained by summing their respective items in SPSS, whereas Table 4.1 reports mean scores (1–5) for ease of interpretation. Prior to conducting the regression, diagnostic checks were carried out. The assumptions of linearity, normality of residuals, homoscedasticity, and absence of serious multicollinearity were all satisfied. Standardized residual plots showed no systematic deviations, and variance inflation factor (VIF) values were all below 3.

4.4.1 Regression Model Summary

Table 4.3 Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate	F Value	df1	df2	pvalue
1	0.61	0.37	0.36	0.88	37.69	3	194	< 0.001

As shown in Table 4.3, the regression model was statistically significant, $F(3, 194) = 37.69$, $p < 0.001$, explaining 37% of the variance in life balance ($R^2 = 0.37$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.36$).

4.4.2 ANOVA for Model Fit

Table 4.4 ANOVA for Regression Model

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F Value	pvalue
Regression	87.63	3	29.21	37.69	< 0.001

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F Value	pvalue
Residual	150.37	194	0.78	—	—
Total	238.00	197	—	—	—

The ANOVA results confirm again that the regression equation as a whole is highly significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating that the set of predictors reliably explains variance in life balance.

4.4.3 Regression Coefficients

Table 4.5 Regression Coefficients for Predictors of Life Balance (N = 198)

Independent Variable	Standardized Coefficient (β)	t Value	pvalue	Hypothesis Test Result
Time Management Stress	-0.31	-4.73	< 0.001	H1 Supported
Academic Stress	-0.27	-4.15	< 0.001	H2 Supported
Employment Stress	-0.25	-3.96	< 0.001	H3 Supported

Interpretation

H1: Time Management Stress significantly predicts lower Life Balance ($\beta = -0.31$, $p < 0.001$). Students who struggle with planning and allocating time are less able to maintain a stable and coordinated daily routine.

H2: Academic Stress has a significant negative effect on Life Balance ($\beta = -0.27$, $p < 0.001$). Demanding coursework, extensive reading, and rigorous assessment reduce the time available for rest, leisure, and personal activities, impairing life balance.

H3: Employment Stress significantly predicts poorer Life Balance ($\beta =$

-0.25, $p < 0.001$). Concerns about career competition, qualification requirements, and external expectations disrupt students' daily rhythms and weaken their overall sense of balance.

The regression findings confirm that all three stressors exert independent and significant negative effects on life balance, providing robust empirical support for the proposed theoretical framework and hypotheses H1–H3.

4.5 Summary of Findings

Based on the statistical analyses presented in this chapter, several key findings emerge:

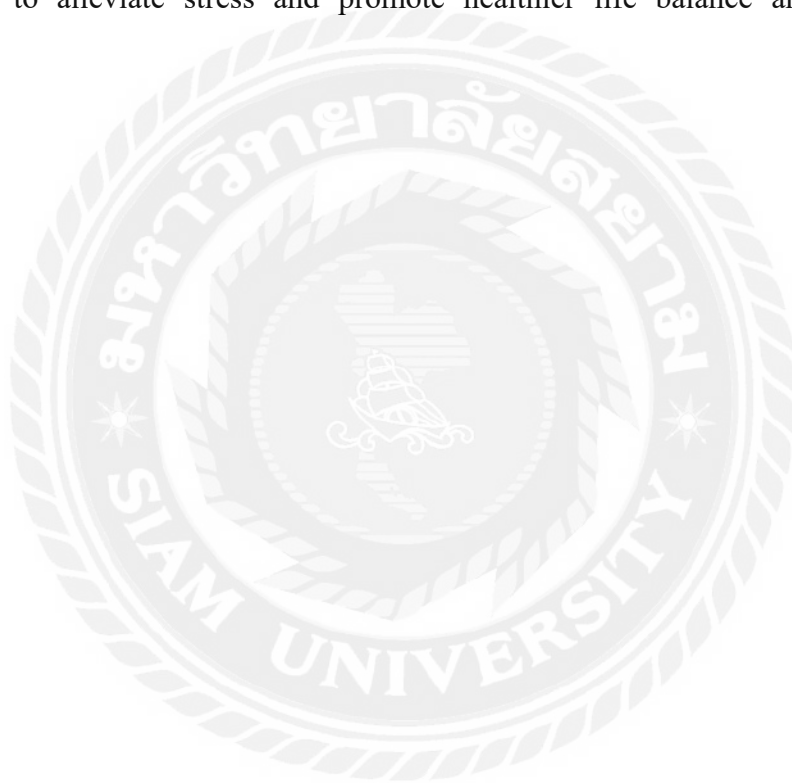
First, undergraduate law students at East China Jiaotong University experience moderate to high levels of stress across the three dimensions—time management stress, academic stress, and employment stress—while their life balance remains only moderately satisfactory, with mean scores slightly above the scale midpoint. This indicates that most students are functioning under sustained pressure and face considerable challenges in maintaining a stable and fulfilling lifestyle.

Second, the correlation analysis demonstrates that all three forms of stress are significantly and negatively associated with life balance. Students who encounter greater difficulties in managing their time, bear heavier academic demands, or experience stronger employment-related concerns tend to report lower levels of life balance, thereby confirming the direction of the hypothesized relationships.

Third, the multiple regression analysis shows that each of the three stressors has a significant and independent negative predictive effect on life balance. Among them, time management stress exerts the strongest standardized effect ($\beta = -0.31$), followed by academic stress ($\beta = -0.27$) and employment stress ($\beta = -0.25$). These results suggest that in the context of legal education, enhancing students' time management abilities, calibrating course workloads and assessment structures, and providing systematic career guidance and psychological support are all essential pathways to improving life balance.

Finally, although the three stress variables exhibit moderate intercorrelations, suggesting that academic load, time constraints, and employment anxiety often occur simultaneously, no serious multicollinearity was detected. This confirms that each stress dimension represents a distinct facet of the student experience and that their effects can be meaningfully differentiated in the regression model.

Taken together, these empirical findings provide a solid quantitative foundation for the subsequent discussion and policy implications in Chapter 5, where targeted interventions at both the individual and institutional levels will be proposed to alleviate stress and promote healthier life balance among law students.



Chapter 5 Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Conclusion

This study examined undergraduate students in the Law School of East China Jiaotong University and analyzed how three distinct forms of stress—time management stress, academic stress, and employment stress—influence their level of life balance. Unlike earlier research that often isolates a single stressor, this study provides an integrated understanding of how personal, academic, and career-related pressures jointly shape students' perceptions and experiences of maintaining balance among academic responsibilities, rest, social relationships, and personal interests.

5.1.1 Time Management Stress and Life Balance

The findings reveal that time management stress plays a decisive role in undermining students' life balance. Difficulties in organizing schedules, setting task priorities, and distributing time across different life domains directly reduce students' capacity to coordinate academic work with personal activities. When students frequently feel they lack sufficient time or struggle to handle multiple responsibilities simultaneously, they tend to reduce engagement in essential restorative activities such as sleep, physical exercise, and social interaction. Given that time is an irreplaceable personal resource, heightened time management stress triggers a cascading effect that impedes students' ability to sustain orderly routines, leading to a noticeable decline in their perceived life balance.

5.1.2 Academic Stress and Life Balance

The study also confirms that academic stress significantly affects life balance. Law programs are characterized by complex theoretical content, substantial reading assignments, demanding case analysis, and rigorous evaluation standards, all of which require substantial cognitive and temporal investment. As academic demands intensify, students often sacrifice leisure, social participation, and personal development opportunities to concentrate on coursework. Over time, many perceive that their lives have been dominated by

academic requirements, making it difficult to maintain equilibrium between learning tasks and physical and psychological well-being. The empirical results indicate that the higher the level of academic stress, the lower the reported level of life balance.

5.1.3 Employment Stress and Life Balance

The third major finding concerns employment stress, which originates from competitive job markets, stringent professional entry standards, and heightened expectations from families and society. Students facing such pressures frequently allocate additional time to internships, qualification examinations, and résumé enhancement in an attempt to improve employability. This competitive environment gradually compresses time available for rest, socializing, and emotional recovery, thereby disrupting the rhythm of daily life. Persistent anxiety about uncertain career prospects intensifies the conflict between preparing for future employment and maintaining current quality of life, ultimately reducing students' overall sense of life balance.

5.1.4 Summary of Methodology and Key Findings

This research employed a structured quantitative survey using validated multi-item Likert scales to measure the three stress variables and life balance. A total of 198 valid responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis in SPSS 25.0. Results demonstrate that law students generally experience moderate-to-high levels of stress, while their life balance remains only marginally adequate. All three types of stress exhibited significant negative correlations with life balance, and regression results further confirmed that each stressor independently predicts lower life balance. Among them, time management stress exerted the strongest effect ($\beta = 0.31$), followed by academic stress ($\beta = 0.27$) and employment stress ($\beta = 0.25$). Collectively, these stressors accounted for 37% of the variance in life balance.

Taken together, these findings clearly address the study's research objective: time management pressure, academic pressure, and employment pressure all significantly undermine the life balance of law students, with time management stress emerging as the most influential predictor within the present sample.

5.2 Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that undergraduate law students at East China Jiaotong University face multiple and mutually reinforcing pressures, and these pressures collectively weaken their ability to sustain life balance. Drawing on stress – coping theory, the negative relationships identified in this study suggest that time management stress, academic stress, and employment stress continuously consume students’ cognitive and emotional resources, making it difficult for them to respond effectively to competing demands across different life domains. Consistent with life balance theory, when one domain—such as academic demands or future career preparation—absorbs excessive time and energy, participation in other essential domains (such as rest, leisure, and social interaction) becomes restricted, resulting in a diminished sense of balance and subjective well-being.

The finding that time management stress is the strongest predictor of life balance suggests that the core difficulty faced by law students does not merely lie in the amount of academic or career-related workload, but in their ability to organize, prioritize, and sequence tasks. Dense course schedules, extensive case reading requirements, and simultaneous preparation for examinations create a perception of “perpetual time shortage.” Without effective time management strategies, students experience cumulative stress and are unable to maintain stable daily routines even if their objective workload remains constant. This explains why time management plays a pivotal role in shaping perceived life balance.

Meanwhile, both academic stress and employment stress also emerged as significant predictors of reduced life balance. This indicates that the challenge is not solely an individual capacity issue but is embedded in the structural characteristics of legal education. High levels of theoretical abstraction, intensive performance-oriented learning environments, and increasingly competitive employment standards compel students to invest additional time and effort into academic and career tasks, often at the expense of restorative behaviors. This supports the argument that life balance is undermined when institutional expectations exceed students’ adaptive capacity.

In summary, the results demonstrate that enhancing students' life balance requires a dual approach: strengthening personal time management competencies at the individual level, and reducing excessive structural demands at the institutional level. Without adjustments in both domains, the imbalance between law students' aspirations and available resources will persist, continuing to jeopardize their emotional well being and life satisfaction.

5.3 Recommendation

Enhancing Students' Time Management Competence: Given that time management stress emerged as the strongest predictor of life balance, educational institutions should strengthen students' practical time management skills. Students should be guided to break complex learning tasks into manageable steps, establish weekly and daily schedules, and distinguish between urgent-important and important-but-not-urgent tasks. Universities may consider embedding time planning modules into freshman seminars, academic advising sessions, or law study skills workshops. Moreover, rest, exercise, and social interaction should be repositioned as necessary components of academic success rather than optional activities.

Reducing Academic Burden Through Curriculum and Assessment Reform: To mitigate academic stress, curriculum designers and instructors should rationalize course sequencing, distribute major assignments more evenly, and avoid clustering exams across multiple courses. Diversified assessment strategies — such as formative evaluation, classroom participation, and project-based learning—can reduce dependence on high-stakes examinations and create a more sustainable learning rhythm. Moderate adjustments of course intensity will help students engage in academic tasks without sacrificing essential life domains.

Strengthening Career Guidance and Institutional Support: To address employment stress, law schools should provide early exposure to diverse legal career paths, competency requirements, and realistic market expectations. Structured internship programs, alumni mentoring, and university – enterprise partnerships can help reduce employment uncertainty and enhance perceived self-efficacy. At the same time, improving access to counseling resources, peer support networks, and stress-coping workshops can help students develop

adaptive strategies and maintain healthier life patterns.

5.4 Further Study

While this study provides a focused empirical analysis of the relationships between time management stress, academic stress, employment stress, and life balance among law students in a single institution, future research may further strengthen and extend this line of inquiry in several directions.

First, future studies may broaden the research scope and diversify the sample characteristics. Comparative investigations across multiple law schools, different regions, or universities with distinct institutional profiles (e.g., research-intensive universities versus teaching-oriented institutions) could help determine whether the effects observed in this study are unique to the context of East China Jiaotong University or reflect more general patterns in Chinese legal education. Cross-cultural or international comparative studies would also be valuable in identifying whether stress–life balance mechanisms differ across legal systems, educational traditions, and labor market structures.

Second, future research may employ more diversified research designs and methodological approaches. Longitudinal studies could track law students' stress trajectories and life balance changes over time, thereby illuminating causal processes and developmental patterns that a single-time-point survey cannot capture. Mixed-methods approaches, integrating quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews or focus groups, could yield deeper insights into students' subjective meanings, coping strategies, and expectations concerning institutional support.

Third, future studies may incorporate additional theoretical variables or conduct intervention-based research. Beyond the three stress dimensions examined in this study, future work could integrate variables such as coping styles, social support, resilience, academic engagement, or psychological well-being to establish a more comprehensive explanatory framework. Experimental or quasi-experimental intervention studies—such as evaluating time management workshops, revised course designs, or career counseling programs—could directly test whether targeted interventions effectively reduce

stress and enhance life balance. This would provide stronger, evidence-based guidance for educational reform and institutional policy development.



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Appendix

The Impact of Time Management Stress, Academic Stress, and Employment Stress on Life Balance among Undergraduate Law Students: A Case Study of East China Jiaotong University

Dear Student,

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey. The purpose of this questionnaire is to investigate the relationships among Time Management Stress, Academic Stress, Employment Stress, and Life Balance among undergraduate law students at East China Jiaotong University.

There are no right or wrong answers. Please answer each question according to your actual situation and true feelings. This survey is anonymous, and all data collected will be used solely for academic research. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential and will not affect your academic record in any way.

Thank you again for your cooperation.

Part I Personal Information

Please select the appropriate options based on your actual situation and mark "√" next to the corresponding ones. This questionnaire does not collect any personally identifiable information and is for academic research purposes only.

1. Gender

☐ Male ☐ Female

2. Grade

☐ Freshman ☐ Sophomore ☐ Junior ☐ Senior

3. Age

☐ 18 or below 18 ☐ 19 – 20 ☐ 21 – 22 ☐ 23

4. Major

☐ Law ☐ Other : _____

5. Internship Status

☐ No internship yet

☐ Have internship experience

If yes, please indicate approximate total duration:

_____ months

Part II Main Questionnaire

Instruction:

For each of the following statements, please choose the option that best reflects your actual situation and feelings, and put a “✓” on the corresponding number.

(5-point Likert scale) :

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree

Measurement Items	Serial Number	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐
Time Management Stress						
I struggle to reasonably plan the time allocation between academic and personal affairs.	Q1					
When facing multiple tasks, I cannot clearly determine priorities.	Q2					
I often feel stressed due to task accumulation caused by procrastination.	Q3					
It is difficult for me to reserve sufficient time for learning tasks such as reading and review.	Q4					
I have trouble balancing the time for study, rest, and social activities.	Q5					

Measurement Items	Serial Number	1 □	2 □	3 □	4 □	5 □
I feel that my time efficiency in handling daily affairs is relatively low.	Q6					
Academic Stress						
The abstract theories of core law courses (e.g., Civil and Commercial Law, Criminal Law) cause me stress.	Q7					
The required reading load of courses (legal provisions, cases, academic literature) is too heavy to complete.	Q8					
The high requirement for logical reasoning ability in case analysis tasks makes me feel strenuous.	Q9					
The course assessment standards (e.g., exam difficulty, thesis requirements) are relatively strict.	Q10					
I need to spend a lot of time to understand the complex concepts and rules in courses.	Q11					
I feel overwhelmed when dealing with multiple high-difficulty courses simultaneously.	Q12					
The time arrangement for course assignments and exams is relatively tight, causing great stress.	Q13					
Employment Stress						
The intensity of competition for jobs in the legal industry makes me feel	Q14					

Measurement Items	Serial Number	1 □	2 □	3 □	4 □	5 □
anxious.						
Professional access thresholds such as the bar exam and civil service exam bring me great pressure.	Q15					
I worry that my academic background and abilities are difficult to make me stand out in job hunting.	Q16					
The employment expectations of society and family for law graduates make me feel burdened.	Q17					
The requirement for practical experience in positions such as corporate legal counsel and law firm roles causes me stress.	Q18					
The increase in the number of law graduates makes me worried about my future employment prospects.	Q19					
The performance of peers in internships and job hunting makes me feel competitive pressure.	Q20					
Life Balance						
I can reasonably allocate time for study and rest to avoid overwork.	Q21					
I have sufficient time to participate in social activities and maintain good interpersonal relationships.	Q22					
I can balance academic tasks and personal hobbies.	Q23					

Measurement Items	Serial Number	1 □	2 □	3 □	4 □	5 □
My daily life rhythm is stable, and my schedule will not be disrupted by stress.	Q24					
I can maintain emotional stability during busy study and rarely experience anxiety or irritability.	Q25					
I am satisfied with my current state of balancing study and life.	Q26					
I have time to accompany family or friends to meet emotional needs.	Q27					
Even when facing pressure, I can ensure a certain amount of leisure time to relax.	Q28					