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Between Stress and Balance: The Challenges of Young Adulthood

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Abstract

This article discusses the challenges that modern young adults face when entering adulthood. Special attention is given to economic difficulties, such as rising living costs and housing problems, as well as social pressure related to professional and personal success. The paper also discusses the impact of social media on how people see their life situation, and the phenomenon of social comparisons that lead to a feeling of not being good enough.

An important part of the article is the analysis of the relationship between mental and physical health, based on data from the "National Health Test of Poles 2025" report. The results show a worsening condition in both areas and a growing level of stress in society, with women being especially at risk. The two-way relationship between mental and physical health is highlighted, as well as the importance of lifestyle as a factor influencing a person's well-being.

The article also points out the importance of keeping a work-life balance and presents basic ways to deal with stress, such as time management, physical activity, and relaxation techniques.

The conclusions show the need for preventive and systemic actions to improve the quality of life of young adults and support them in dealing with the challenges of the modern world.

Keywords: young adults, mental health, physical health, stress, social pressure, cost of living, work-life balance

Introduction

In today's fast-changing world, the environment affects how we all function. The younger generation is a group especially exposed to the effects of these changes. They must quickly move from the education period to full life independence. Entering adulthood means not only making key decisions about a career path and personal life, but also dealing with growing economic demands, social pressure, and health challenges.

The aim of this article is to analyze the most important problems faced by modern young adults. It focuses especially on economic difficulties, the impact of social pressure, and the relationship between mental and physical health. The analysis also covers the issue of life balance as an essential element for a person's well-being. It combines theory with the analysis

of empirical data. This allows us to present these issues comprehensively and show their importance in modern society.

1. CHALLENGES FACED BY MODERN YOUNG ADULTS

Entering adulthood requires making many important life decisions. Young people must handle the pressure of finishing their education, passing final exams, choosing a field of study, and starting a professional career. They are increasingly expected to achieve financial stability, independence, and the ability to run their own household.

One of the most important challenges faced by young adults is economic difficulties caused by rising living costs. In many countries, the cost of living (especially housing costs) grows faster than the incomes of people starting their careers. Unaffordable prices of apartments and rent make young people increasingly decide to continue living in their family home due to so-called housing uncertainty. This can take different forms, such as trouble paying rent, having to move often, or not being able to rent or buy an apartment. These situations cause a feeling of instability and an increased level of stress. A home is not just a material thing, but also a psychological one—it provides a sense of safety and stability. A lack of these can negatively affect mental well-being.

Another factor that increases pressure is how young people see their situation compared to others. Social media often presents a perfect picture of life, success, and wealth, which makes people frequently compare themselves to their peers. This is especially visible among young adults (around 18-20 years old) who show an image of quick financial or professional success on the Internet. Reaching full financial independence at such an early age is quite rare, and some of these successes are supported by family money or a good financial background. Still, on social media, they are often presented as the result of only challenging work and entrepreneurship, which can lead to unfair comparisons.

Watching such achievements can make other young people feel inadequate and believe they are falling behind their peers. This phenomenon is known as relative deprivation and can lower self-esteem and worsen mental well-being. This pressure is made even stronger by social expectations to have a stable career, own an apartment, or start a family. These expectations can come from close family and friends, as well as from wider cultural norms about life success.

In some cases, young adults also feel responsible for supporting their families financially, which adds to their stress and tension.

Modern entry into adulthood involves rising living costs, housing problems, and social pressure for success and independence. Comparing oneself to peers on social media increases stress and the feeling of not being good enough. Understanding these challenges is key to effectively helping young adults build a stable future.

2. MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH - DAILY CHALLENGES OF YOUNG ADULTS

The mental and physical health of young adults is connected to their daily lifestyle, duties, social pressure, and financial limits. Modern life brings many challenges that directly affect mood, energy, and the ability to take care of oneself. People entering adulthood must balance studying, working, household chores, social life, and personal passions, which often leads to mental and physical overload.

One of the main sources of stress is the lack of time and money to follow personal passions and interests. Many young people give up on sports, language, or art classes because they must work to support themselves. Not being able to go on a dream holiday or attend cultural events causes a feeling of restriction and frustration. A young person who dreams of traveling alone often experiences chronic tension and a feeling of not achieving their goals because, instead of following their plans, they must save money for rent and other expenses.

Social pressure and comparing oneself to peers on social media put an extra burden on mental health. Watching friends who travel, develop careers, buy apartments, start families, or do their hobbies makes many young people feel a constant need to compete and follow others. However, people often forget that these successes are sometimes the result of family financial support. Still, those who watch such content compare it with their own possibilities, which can lead to feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, and higher stress.

Expectations from family and loved ones are another source of tension. Many young adults feel pressure to find a partner, start a family, or achieve financial stability. In families where professional and material success is highly valued, young people often feel judged and compared to their peers. This increases stress and the feeling of pressure, leading to decisions made because of what others expect.

As a result, long-term tension related to meeting social, professional, and family expectations can lead to profound consequences such as professional burnout. It increasingly affects young adults who try to balance studying, working, and their private lives. Long-term overload of duties, high expectations from employers, and the pressure to achieve quick success lead to chronic fatigue, a drop in motivation, and lower job satisfaction. People experiencing burnout often neglect their own needs, give up on hobbies, limit physical activity, and spend less time resting and sleeping. In the end, this worsens both their mental and physical health.

Daily challenges affect the physical condition of young people. Too many duties and a lack of money make it hard to prepare healthy meals, exercise regularly, and get enough sleep. This results in chronic fatigue, headaches, muscle tension, lack of concentration, and lower immunity to infections. Long-term neglect of physical health can also cause excessive weight gain or sudden weight loss, digestion problems, lower physical fitness, and even hormonal disorders.

Having too many duties also leads to giving up on everyday movement, such as walking, cycling, home workouts, or swimming. A lack of physical activity, combined with an irregular lifestyle, weakens muscles, increases the risk of injuries, and worsens the overall condition of the body. Similarly, a lack of sleep and a poor diet affect the immune system, making people get sick more easily. Even short-term stress can cause muscle tension, back, neck, and shoulder pain. Long-term stress can lead to heart problems, digestion issues, and chronic fatigue.

This creates a vicious circle: stress and physical fatigue lower the motivation to take care of the body, while a lack of exercise, a bad diet, and sleep problems make health issues worse and lower mental well-being. Therefore, keeping a balance between duties, physical activity, a healthy diet, and rest is crucial for maintaining full health and energy in the daily life of young adults.

Entering adulthood involves many demands that can affect the well-being of young people. The need to combine different life roles, limited money, and expectations from others often cause tension and fatigue. When there is no time for regeneration, movement, or a proper diet, both mental state and physical condition get worse. That is why it is so important to consciously care for balance in daily life to stay healthy and prevent long-term health problems.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH OF POLES

Mental health is currently one of the key elements necessary for stable social and economic development. The mental condition of society directly affects work efficiency, healthcare costs, and the overall quality of life of citizens. To effectively monitor these phenomena and introduce preventive actions, research organizations regularly prepare health reports. Their main goal is to identify threats early, study epidemiological trends, and assess society's health awareness.

3.1 Mental health assessment

As the data below shows, the mental health of Poles has noticeably worsened over the last five years. Although 57% of adults rate their mental health positively in 2025, this result is 9 percentage points lower than in 2020. The chart also clearly shows a difference between genders - women rate their mental state worse (only 53% of good and particularly good ratings) compared to men (62%). The growing number of people who rate their mental health badly shows an urgent need to increase access to psychological care.

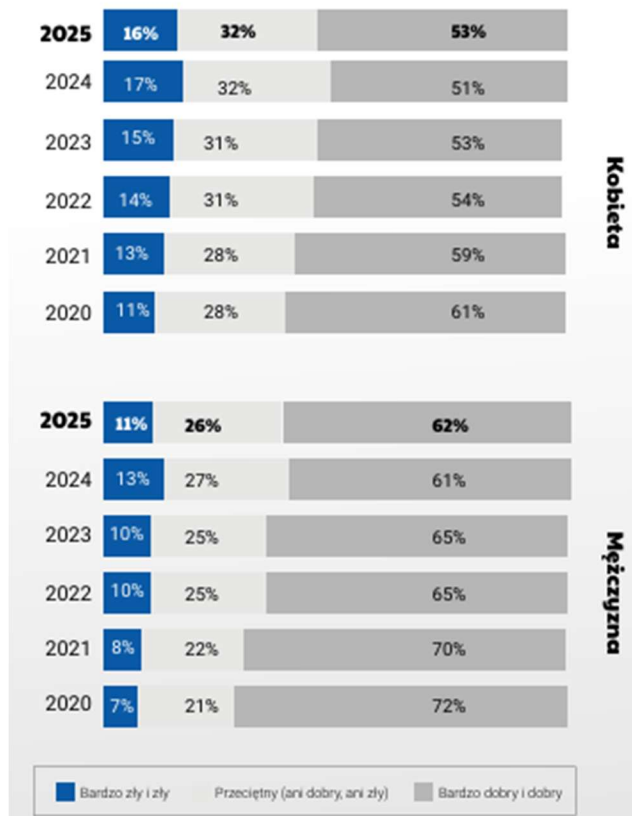


Chart 1. Subjective assessment of the mental health of Poles in 2020-2025 by gender. Source: National Health Test of Poles 2025.

3.2 Physical health assessment

The next summary shows the assessment of physical health, which is strongly connected to the data from Chart 1. Here, we also see a clear drop in satisfaction compared to previous years. The fact that these negative trends overlap confirms the theory that lower physical well-being (e.g., bad sleep quality or poor diet) directly affects mental condition.

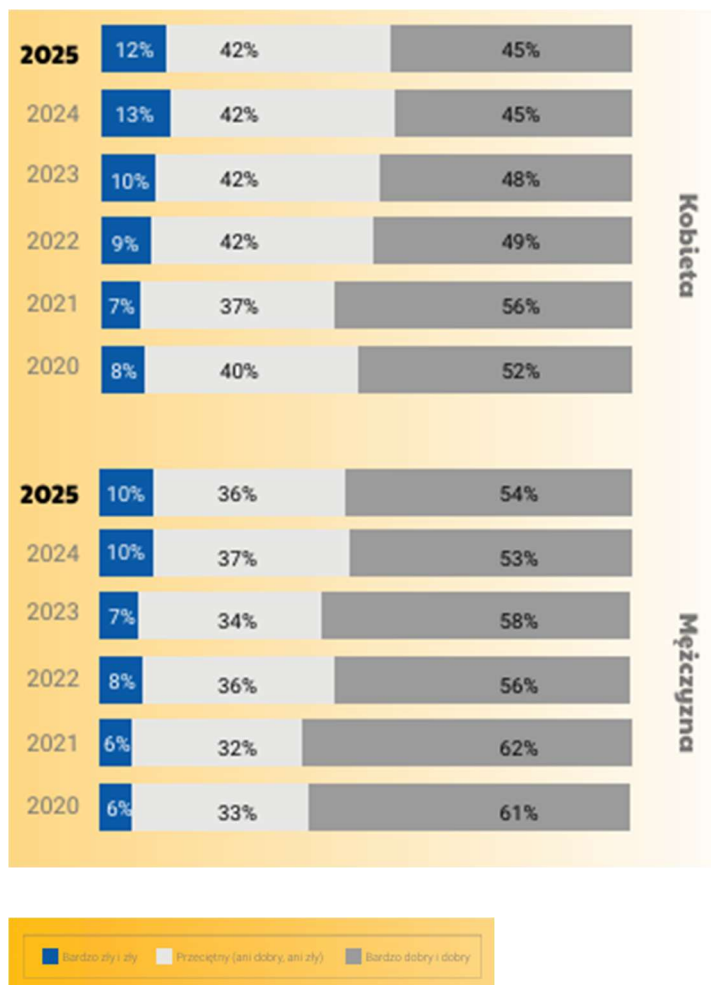


Chart 2. Subjective assessment of the physical health of Poles in 2020-2025 by gender. Source: National Health Test of Poles 2025.

3.3 Feeling stress

One of the main factors that destroy both health areas mentioned above is chronic stress. In 2025, more than half of Poles live under high nervous tension (22% experience it every day). Just like in the health assessment, women are more exposed to this factor than men. Such an important level of exposure to stress directly leads to professional burnout and the development of mental and psychosomatic disorders.

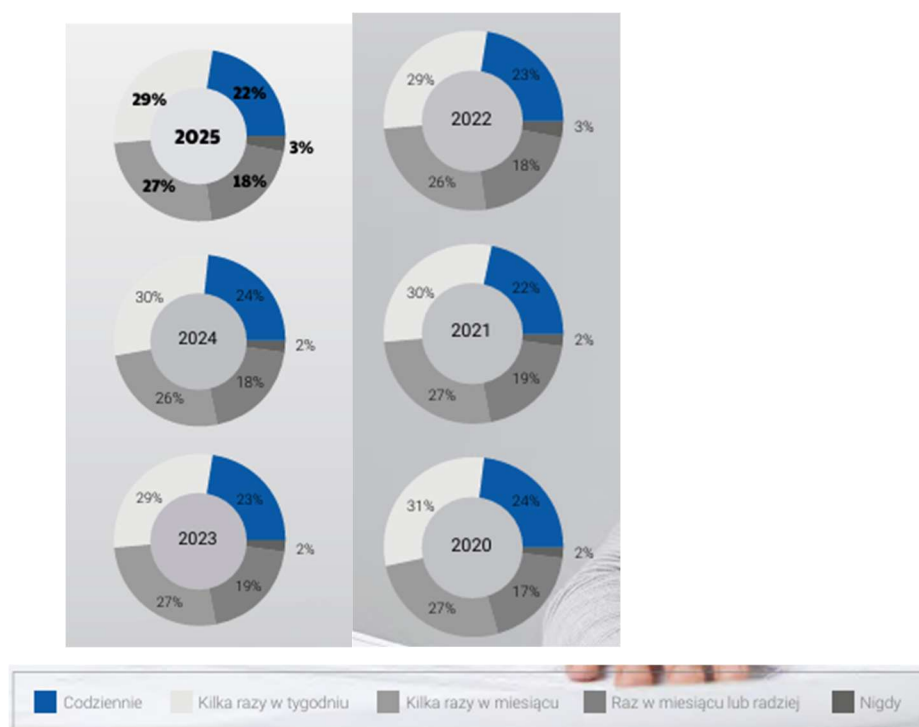


Chart 3. Frequency of stress in the surveyed population in 2025. Source: National Health Test of Poles 2025.

To sum up the research results from the "National Health Test of Poles 2025" report by the Medonet group, we can see that the mental and physical health of Poles is getting worse, and both areas are connected. The report data shows that a key factor influencing this situation is an important level of chronic stress. Negative trends are visible in both the mental and physical condition of society. Women are especially at risk, as they more often report feeling worse and having higher stress levels. The results highlight the importance of lifestyle and the need for professional help. Because of this, preventive and systemic actions are necessary to improve the overall well-being of society.

4. BALANCE AND HARMONY: HOW TO FIND BALANCE IN THE MODERN WORLD?

The modern world gives people many challenges that cause mental tension and burden. Long working hours, growing professional responsibility, and the need to keep high efficiency make it harder to keep a work-life balance. In such conditions, it is important not only to avoid stress but to develop the skills to deal with it effectively and reduce its negative effects.

Functioning in modern society requires being involved in many areas at the same time, such as work, family life, and social relationships. In this context, it is important to understand the difference between harmony and balance. Harmony means a state of inner peace, while balance refers to everyday management of time, energy, and attention. Losing this balance, usually because one area (like work) dominates the others, leads to growing tension and a worse mood.

One of the main reasons why it is hard to keep balance is the fast pace of life and social pressure. The expectations of other people, comparing us to them, and the model of success promoted in modern culture make demands on individuals grow. As a result, people limit the time they spend on resting, sleeping, and relationships with family and friends, which ruins their life balance.

In these conditions, it is especially important to use stress management strategies. One of the basic methods is effective time management, which means setting priorities and planning tasks realistically. These actions help to reduce the feeling of being overwhelmed and give you more control over your daily life.

Relaxation techniques, such as breathing exercises, meditation, or mindfulness training, also play a significant role. Using them regularly helps lower tension and improve concentration, making it easier to handle stressful situations. Physical activities are a powerful addition to these actions, as it positively affects both physical and mental condition, helping to reduce tension and improve your mood.

Regenerating the body is just as important. Getting enough sleep, taking breaks during the day, and having time to rest and develop hobbies help rebuild psychological and physical resources and increase stress resistance. Social relationships are also important, as they provide natural emotional support and help with difficulties. Overall, it is crucial to develop psychological skills, such as assertiveness, the ability to set boundaries, and keeping a healthy distance from high expectations. A conscious approach to your own limits and accepting them helps avoid overload and support maintaining life balance.

Finding harmony between work and personal life is essential for health and a general feeling of fulfillment. Today's pace of life and pressure can disturb this balance, which is why it is important to consciously plan time, manage energy, and set boundaries. Balance is not something you can achieve finally, but a continuous process that requires constant attention and adjusting to changing situations.

Conclusions

Entering adulthood today involves multidimensional challenges that affect the economic, social, and health aspects of young people's lives. Rising living costs, housing problems, and the pressure to achieve success quickly have an enormous impact on the level of stress and the feeling of stability. Additionally, the popularity of social media encourages comparing oneself with others, which can lead to lower self-esteem and worse mental well-being.

An important conclusion from the article is the close connection between mental and physical health, which is mutual and long-lasting. The worsening of one of these areas always affects the other, creating a vicious circle that makes health problems deeper. In this context, it is crucial to take preventive actions and build awareness about a healthy lifestyle.

The ability to balance professional and private life is also important. Because of the growing demands of the modern world, the ability to manage time, set boundaries, and care for regeneration is the foundation of well-being. Effective support for young adults requires both systemic actions and individual strategies for dealing with everyday challenges. Understanding the complexity of these problems is necessary to create solutions that help improve the quality of life and build a stable and satisfying future.

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