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The Role of Social Support and Coping Strategies in Emotional Recovery after Divorce among Employed Divorced Men and Women in Colombo District

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ABSTRACT

Divorce is a significant life event that can adversely affect emotional wellbeing, social relationships, and everyday functioning. Although employment may provide financial security and a structured routine, divorced individuals may still experience psychological distress while managing both professional and personal responsibilities. This study examined the role of social support and coping strategies in emotional recovery after divorce among employed divorced men and women in Colombo District, Sri Lanka. A quantitative, cross-sectional, and correlational research design was employed. Data were collected from 100 employed divorced individuals using a structured close-ended questionnaire designed on a five-point Likert scale. Respondents were selected through purposive non-probability sampling. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation analysis, multiple regression analysis, and independent samples t-tests with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings indicated a moderate level of emotional recovery among respondents. In bivariate analyses, social support was positively associated with emotional recovery ($r = 0.504$, $p < 0.001$), as was adaptive coping ($r = 0.576$, $p < 0.001$), whereas maladaptive coping was not significantly associated with emotional recovery ($r = 0.076$, $p = 0.450$). In the multiple regression model, adaptive coping emerged as a significant positive predictor of emotional recovery ($\beta = 0.511$, $p = 0.002$), while maladaptive coping was a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -0.347$, $p < 0.001$). Social support, although significant at the bivariate level, was not a statistically significant independent predictor after controlling for coping variables ($\beta = 0.275$, $p = 0.116$). Significant gender differences were observed in emotional recovery, social support, and coping scores. Owing to the cross-sectional design and the use of purposive, non-probability sampling ($N = 100$), these results should be interpreted as sample-specific associations rather than evidence of causal effects or population-level estimates. Accordingly, the study provides context-specific evidence on the relationships among social support, coping strategies, and emotional recovery among employed divorced individuals in Colombo District.

1. Introduction

Divorce is widely recognised as one of the most stressful life events, disrupting emotional equilibrium, social networks, and economic stability. The dual demands of maintaining professional responsibilities while processing the emotional aftermath of marital dissolution can intensify distress and slow psychological adjustment for employed individuals (Sbarra & Emery, 2005; Amato, 2010). Social support and coping strategies are widely regarded as key resources shaping this adjustment process. However, limited localised evidence remain on how these factors operate among employed divorced individuals in urban Sri Lankan setting like Colombo District.

In Sri Lanka, divorce remains as a socially sensitive issue, often accompanied by stigma rooted in cultural and religious norms, despite rising urbanisation and increasing workforce participation among both men and women (Adikaram, 2019; Amarathunga & Wickramaarachchi, 2018). For employed divorced individuals, financial independence through employment does not automatically translate into emotional stability. Supportive relationships at home, in the workplace, and within the community, together with the coping strategies

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individuals adopt, are central to how effectively they adjust (Kołodziej-Zaleska & Przybyła-Basista, 2016; Bondarchuk et al., 2024).

Although prior research has consistently linked social support and coping responses to post-divorce adjustment, important gaps remain in the existing evidence. Much of the literature examines social support or coping in isolation, while relatively few studies considered these constructs together within a single empirical model. Moreover, there is limited evidence focusing specifically on employed divorced adults in Sri Lanka. Employment adds a distinctive context in which individuals must navigate both personal adjustment and occupational responsibilities, and workplace relationships may serve as a meaningful source of perceived support. Against this backdrop, the present study focused on employed divorced men and women in Colombo District and investigated the statistical relationships among social support, adaptive coping, maladaptive coping, and emotional recovery. The study also explored gender differences, while explicitly avoiding assumptions that any observed differences reflect inherent characteristics of men or women. Given the cross-sectional design and non-probability sampling, the findings are intended to describe patterns of association within the study sample rather than to establish causal relationships or to provide population-level estimates. This study addressed this gap by examining the following research questions:

I. What is the level of emotional recovery among employed divorced men and women in Colombo District?

II. What is the relationship between social support and emotional recovery after divorce?

III. What coping strategies are commonly used, and how do they relate to emotional recovery?

IV. Are there gender differences in social support, coping strategies, and emotional recovery?

Accordingly, the study aims to examine social support, coping strategies and emotional recovery after divorce among employed divorced men and women in Colombo District, with a view to informing counselling practice, workplace support policy, and community-level interventions.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Emotional Recovery after Divorce

Divorce constitutes a major life transition with potential consequences across emotional, psychological, social, and occupational domains. While the end of an unsatisfactory or conflictual relationship can sometimes relieve chronic stressors, the dissolution of marriage frequently precipitates emotional challenges such as sadness, loneliness, anxiety, reduced self-esteem, and uncertainty about the future. Research summarising trends and developments in divorce studies highlights wide heterogeneity in post-divorce outcomes. Some individuals exhibit transient distress and rapid adaptation, whereas others show prolonged difficulties across multiple life domains (Amato, 2010). Consequently, emotional recovery following divorce should be conceptualised as an individualised process of psychological adjustment rather than a uniform endpoint.

Meta-analytic and longitudinal evidence on adaptation to major life events underlines this heterogeneity. Luhmann et al. (2012) show that changes in subjective well-being after life events vary considerably in magnitude and duration, which implies that recovery involves more than simply attenuating negative affect. It also entails restoring psychological functioning and cultivating positive future-oriented perspectives. Applied to divorce, emotional recovery therefore encompasses multiple dimensions: emotional stability, acceptance of the relationship dissolution, renewed self-esteem, improved life satisfaction, reduction of distress, and the capacity to engage constructively in social and occupational roles.

Longitudinal studies of relationship dissolution corroborate the dynamic nature of adjustment. Sbarra and Emery (2005) found substantial intraindividual heterogeneity in trajectories following relationship breakups: some individuals experience extended distress, while others regain emotional equilibrium and reintegrate into social and occupational roles. These findings emphasise that factors which facilitate or hinder adaptation are crucial to understanding emotional recovery.

Recent empirical work further refines which psychological processes shape post-divorce adjustment. Guzmán-González et al. (2025) identify associations between adjustment profiles and factors such as attachment insecurity, forgiveness of the former partner, and difficulties in emotion regulation, suggesting that individual differences in interpersonal schemas and emotion-regulatory capacities influence recovery. Similarly, research on breakups and separations highlights the role of rumination and coping responses in determining the intensity and persistence of emotional distress (Mancone et al., 2025; Gehl et al., 2024). Taken together, these studies imply that emotional recovery depends not only on the event itself, but also on the psychological resources and processes through which individuals interpret and respond to the separation.

The employment context shapes recovery in distinctive ways. For employed divorced individuals, work may provide routine, social interaction, financial independence, and a sense of purpose that support adjustment. However, occupational responsibilities and workplace demands can also complicate recovery, particularly where emotional difficulties impede concentration, productivity, or job retention (Adikaram, 2019). Studies of divorced employees emphasise that workplace factors such as supportive colleagues, flexible arrangements, or conversely, harassment and stigma can substantially influence post-divorce functioning. In societies where divorce carries social sanctions or altered family dynamics, such as Sri Lanka, these workplace and social dimensions acquire additional

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salience (Amarathunga & Wickramaarachchi, 2018). Here, individuals must often negotiate changes in family roles, social expectations, financial circumstances, and personal identity simultaneously, which affects their capacity for emotional recovery.

Synthesising this literature suggests that emotional recovery after divorce is multidimensional and moderated by intrapersonal resources (attachment, emotion regulation), coping processes, and contextual supports such as employment and social networks. This body of evidence motivates this study to focus on social support and coping strategies as closely related factors of emotional recovery among employed divorced men and women.

2.2. Social support

Social support broadly denotes the emotional, practical, informational, and interpersonal resources individuals perceive as available from significant others and their social environment. Theoretical frameworks posit that social support contributes to psychological well-being via both direct benefits (promoting positive affect and functioning) and buffering effects (attenuating the impact of stressors) (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Support becomes particularly consequential during stressful life transitions, providing reassurance, practical aid, advice, and opportunities for emotion processing.

Empirical studies of divorce consistently implicate social support in post-dissolution well-being. Kołodziej-Zaleska and Przybyła-Basista (2016) report that social support predicts psychological well-being among divorced individuals, with family and close relationships often constituting primary sources of emotional reassurance. The protective functions of social support extend across populations and stressors: recent reviews and primary studies link perceived support to lower symptoms of depression and anxiety and to higher positive affect (Acoba, 2024; McLean et al., 2022). Acoba (2024), investigating the mediating role of perceived stress, demonstrates that support from family and significant others reduces perceived stress, thereby increasing positive affect and decreasing anxiety and depression, findings that reinforce the theoretical mechanism proposed by Lazarus and Folkman's stress and coping perspective.

Social support is multidimensional and arrives from multiple sources such as family, friends, colleagues, and significant others, and each source may play distinct roles in adjustment. Family support typically supplies sustained emotional connection and instrumental help. Friends offer companionship and opportunities for emotional expression, and workplace contacts can provide practical accommodations and a sense of continuity in role performance. In occupational contexts, colleague and supervisor support through empathy, flexibility, or role negotiation may mitigate the adverse work-related consequences of divorce or, conversely, exacerbate stress when support is absent or when stigma occurs (Bortel et al., 2024; Adikaram, 2019).

The Sri Lankan context highlights specific social dynamics relevant to divorce. Research indicates that divorce can carry broader social implications of altered family ties, community perceptions, and identity shifts that extend beyond the private dissolution of marriage (Amarathunga & Wickramaarachchi, 2018). These social consequences mean that access to supportive networks, and the perceived acceptability of seeking or receiving support, can influence recovery trajectories. Additionally, support from a new or current partner (when present) may constitute an important resource for some individuals but is not universally available. Thus, studies should consider partner support as one possible, not assumed, source.

Despite its benefits, social support is neither monolithic nor uniformly effective. Perceived availability and utilisation of support differ from objective network size, and individuals vary in how they interpret or accept help. Moreover, support and coping are interrelated. Supportive relationships can facilitate particular coping styles (e.g., encouragement to seek help), while inadequate support may increase reliance on solitary or maladaptive strategies. This conceptual overlap motivates examining social support and coping simultaneously to understand their joint and potentially interactive influences on emotional recovery.

2.3. Coping strategies

Coping strategies denote the cognitive and behavioural efforts individuals deploy to manage stressful situations and their associated emotional demands. Carver et al.'s (1989) framework remains influential, distinguishing diverse coping responses such as problem-focused action, cognitive reframing, seeking social support, acceptance, and avoidance. Importantly, coping responses can be adaptive or maladaptive depending on context and outcomes. Some strategies promote effective adjustment, while others provide short-term relief but impede longer-term recovery.

Adaptive coping strategies typically involve constructive engagement with stressors: active problem solving, positive reframing, acceptance, planning, seeking instrumental or emotional support, and maintaining meaningful activities (exercise, hobbies, work engagement). These strategies can help restore a sense of control, preserve functioning, and foster future orientation qualities integral to emotional recovery after divorce. Empirical evidences link adaptive coping to better mental health outcomes across stress contexts (Bondarchuk et al., 2024; Tremolada et al., 2016).

Maladaptive coping comprises responses such as avoidance, denial, social withdrawal, excessive self-blame, persistent anger, and substance misuse. Although these behaviours may temporarily reduce distress, they often prevent emotional processing and problem resolution, prolonging or intensifying psychological symptoms (Chaaya et al., 2025; Mancone et al., 2025). Notably, individuals frequently employ multiple coping strategies simultaneously rather than exclusively using one

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style. Hence, coping is not a simple good-bad continuum but a multifaceted repertoire whose composition influences outcomes.

Cultural and contextual factors shape coping choices. Sri Lankan research, although limited in the divorce literature, demonstrates that cultural norms and community practices steer coping responses following traumatic or stressful events (Gunawardena et al., 2016). For employed divorced individuals, workplace demands may constrain the time and energy available for adaptive coping or may provide structured opportunities (e.g., job tasks, social contact) that support recovery. This interplay underscores the rationale for examining adaptive and maladaptive coping as separate predictors of emotional recovery in occupationally active divorced populations.

Recent studies exploring breakups and relationship loss emphasise mediating role of coping between dispositional factors (e.g., attachment insecurity, rumination) and adjustment outcomes (Gehl et al., 2024; Guzmán-González et al., 2025). Such evidence suggests that coping processes may convert psychological resources and social contexts into observable differences in recovery. Consequently, research that measures adaptive and maladaptive coping alongside social support can better isolate the proximal mechanisms that promote or inhibit emotional recovery.

2.4. Research Gap

The literature consistently documents that divorce can undermine psychological well-being and that individuals vary in their adjustment trajectories (Amato, 2010; Luhmann et al., 2012; Sbarra & Emery, 2005). Research also establishes social support and coping as important correlates of post-divorce outcomes (Kołodziej-Zaleska & Przybyła-Basista, 2016; Carver et al., 1989). Recent studies further clarify mechanisms such as attachment, emotion regulation, perceived stress, and coping repertoires, linking interpersonal and intrapersonal resources to recovery (Guzmán-González et al., 2025; Acoba, 2024; Bondarchuk et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, gaps remain. First, many studies examine social support, coping, or adjustment in isolation rather than testing their combined predictive value within the same empirical model. Second, relatively little research focuses specifically on employed divorced adults which is an important group for whom occupational functioning and workplace supports are salient. Third, evidence from Sri Lanka and similar cultural settings is comparatively sparse, despite indicators that social norms and workplace dynamics uniquely shape post-divorce experiences (Amarathunga & Wickramaarachchi, 2018; Adikaram, 2019). Finally, gender differences in divorce consequences and coping strategies warrant more nuanced investigation because men and women may experience and respond to divorce differently across social and occupational contexts (Leopold, 2018).

Addressing these gaps, this study examines social support (including family, friends, workplace/colleagues, and current partner where applicable), adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies, and emotional recovery among employed divorced men and women in Colombo District. By modelling social support and coping together and considering gender differences in outcomes, the research aims to contribute contextually relevant evidence on the mechanisms that promote emotional recovery in an understudied population and cultural setting.

Taken together, the literature suggests that social support and coping are consistently relevant to post-divorce adjustment, yet their relationships are neither wholly independent nor uniform across individuals and contexts. Social support can offer emotional, informational, and practical resources, whereas coping encompasses the cognitive and behavioral strategies people use to manage stressful circumstances. Although these constructs are conceptually distinct, they are likely interrelated in meaningful ways. For instance, supportive relationships may encourage help-seeking, positive reframing, or other adaptive responses, while an individual's coping preferences may, in turn, shape how they perceive, seek out, and make use of available support. As a result, examining social support and coping within a single statistical model may reveal patterns that differ from those observed in separate bivariate analyses. The literature further indicates that post-divorce experiences are influenced by social and cultural context, employment circumstances, and gender-related expectations. These considerations underscore the importance of context-specific empirical research, rather than assuming that findings from other populations can be directly applied to employed divorced adults in Colombo District.

2.5. Theoretical Foundation

This study is underpinned by two complementary frameworks: the Stress and Coping perspective (Lazarus & Folkman, as operationalised in Carver et al., 1989) and Cohen and Wills' (1985) Stress, Social Support, and Buffering Hypothesis. The Stress and Coping perspective conceptualise stress as an appraisal process. Individuals evaluate whether environmental demands exceed their resources and select coping responses accordingly. From this vantage, adaptive coping can reduce perceived threat and facilitate problem resolution, whereas maladaptive coping can sustain perceived stress and impede recovery.

Cohen and Wills' buffering model proposes that social support can attenuate the psychological impact of stress, either directly (providing positive experiences that improve well-being) or indirectly (reducing perceived stress or promoting effective coping). Applied to divorce, social support may supply tangible resources (instrumental help, financial aid) and intangible resources (empathy, validation) that decrease perceived burden and encourage adaptive coping strategies. Because social support and coping may be closely interrelated as support can shape coping choices and coping may affect how individuals seek or utilise support, integrating both perspectives provides a

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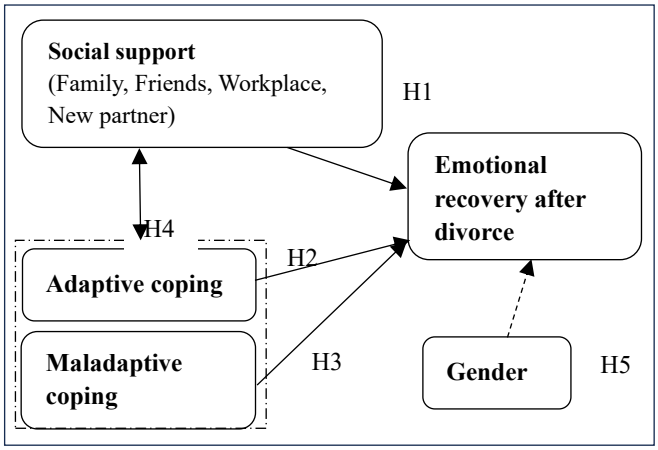
coherent conceptual framework. This integration justifies testing not only statistical associations of social support and coping on emotional recovery, but also their associations and potential mediating pathways.

Integrating these perspectives offers a theoretical foundation for examining the relationships among social support, coping strategies, and emotional recovery. However, this theoretical framework does not specify the temporal or causal direction of these relationships within the present study. Given the cross-sectional design, the analysis can identify statistical associations and conditional relationships among the measured variables, but it cannot determine whether social support gives rise to particular coping responses, whether coping shapes perceived support, or whether both are influenced by other underlying factors. Accordingly, the framework informs the selection and interpretation of variables while acknowledging that the observed relationships should be understood as associations rather than as demonstrated causal pathways

2.6. Conceptual Framework

Based on the reviewed literature and the theoretical foundations of the study, a conceptual framework was developed to examine relationships among social support, coping strategies, and emotional recovery following divorce. Social support is operationalized as support from family, friends, workplace/colleagues, and a current partner (where applicable). Coping strategies are categorized as adaptive (e.g., problem-solving, acceptance, seeking support) and maladaptive (e.g., avoidance, withdrawal, substance use).

Emotional recovery serves as the dependent variable and encompasses both psychological (emotion regulation, self-esteem, distress reduction) and functional (work performance, social engagement, life satisfaction) dimensions of post-divorce adjustment. The framework proposes that social support and coping strategies are statistically related to emotional recovery and that social support is associated with coping responses. Gender is included as a grouping variable to test for between-group differences in emotional recovery and in the modeled relationships. The framework integrates the Stress and Coping perspective with Cohen and Wills' (1985) Stress, Social Support, and Buffering Hypothesis, providing the basis for the hypotheses tested in the study.



2.7. Hypothesis Development

Drawing on the Stress and Coping perspective and Cohen and Wills' buffering hypothesis, and informed by the empirical literature reviewed above, this study derives specific, testable hypotheses about the determinants of emotional recovery after divorce. The literature indicates that social support and coping strategies are proximal influences on post-divorce adjustment, and that these factors may interact with one another and with gendered experiences of separation. Accordingly, the following hypotheses were formulated to evaluate the statistical associations of social support and adaptive and maladaptive coping on emotional recovery, the association between social support and coping, and whether emotional recovery varies by gender among employed divorced adults in Colombo District.

H1: Social support significantly associated with emotional recovery after divorce among employed men and women in Colombo District.

H2: Adaptive coping is significantly associated with emotional recovery after divorce among employed men and women in Colombo District.

H3: Maladaptive coping is significantly associated with emotional recovery after divorce among employed men and women in Colombo District.

H4: Social support is significantly associated with coping strategies among employed men and women after divorce

H5: Emotional recovery differs significantly by gender among employed men and women in Colombo District.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

A quantitative, cross-sectional, correlational design was adopted to examine how social support and coping strategies relate to emotional recovery after divorce among employed men and women in Colombo District, complemented by comparative analyses to assess gender differences across the study variables.

3.2. Population and Sample

The study comprised 100 employed divorced individuals residing in Colombo District. Participants were recruited through purposive, non-probability sampling via professional networks and referrals, based on eligibility criteria of being legally divorced, currently employed, and living within the study area. This approach was adopted because no readily available, centralized sampling frame existed to identify employed divorced adults in the district. Nevertheless, purposive non-probability sampling limits the extent to which the sample can be regarded as representative of the broader population of divorced, employed adults. In addition, the sample size of 100 constrains statistical precision and the generalizability of the findings beyond the immediate study

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context. Accordingly, the results should be interpreted primarily as evidence concerning the characteristics and relationships observed within this specific sample, rather than as population-level estimates.

3.3. Data Collection

3.3.1. Questionnaire Development

Data were collected using a structured, digital, self-administered, closed-ended questionnaire distributed through counselling-centre networks and social media platforms within the study area. The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. The questionnaire consisted of items measuring emotional recovery, social support, and coping strategies, together with demographic information, including gender. The questionnaire items were developed with reference to established theoretical constructs and relevant empirical literature on divorce adjustment, social support, and coping strategies. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of the purpose of the study and the confidential treatment of their responses. The collected responses were subsequently coded and prepared for statistical analysis.

3.3.2 Ethical Procedures

Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Before completing the questionnaire, respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and the nature of their involvement. No personally identifying information was required for the statistical analysis, and all responses were treated confidentially. Participants were not asked to disclose information beyond the items included in the study instrument and were free to decide whether or not to take part. In view of the sensitive nature of divorce-related experiences, the questionnaire was administered in a self-completed format to afford respondents privacy when responding. The study did not involve any experimental intervention or manipulation.

3.4 Measurement of Variables

The study measured three principal constructs: emotional recovery, social support, and coping strategies. Emotional recovery was assessed with 15 items covering emotional stability, anxiety reduction, future orientation, self-esteem, social engagement, loneliness, life satisfaction, work concentration, sleep, depressive symptoms, acceptance of divorce, emotional control, positive mood, resilience, and personal growth.

Social support comprised 15 items across four sources of family (4 items), friends (4), workplace/colleagues (3), and current partner where applicable (4), assessing emotional understanding, practical assistance, advice, reassurance, workplace flexibility, and perceived interpersonal support (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Kołodziej-Zaleska & Przybyła-Basista, 2016; Acoba, 2024).

Coping strategies included 14 items: eight adaptive (active problem solving, positive reframing, seeking support, work engagement, exercise, acceptance, future planning, hobbies/creative activity) and six maladaptive (avoidance, denial, social withdrawal, substance use, excessive self-blame, anger) (Carver et al., 1989; Bondarchuk et al., 2024; Chaaya et al., 2025).

Table 1: Measurement of Study Constructs

Measurement of Study Constructs			
Construct	**Dimension**	**No. of Items**	**Item Focus**
Emotional recovery	Overall emotional recovery	15	Emotional stability, anxiety, hope, self-esteem, social engagement, loneliness, life satisfaction, work concentration, sleep, depression, acceptance, emotional control, positive mood, resilience, personal growth
Social support	Family support	4	Emotional understanding, practical help, advice, care
	Friends' support	4	Listening, practical help, suggestions, feeling valued
	Colleague/ workplace support	3	Understanding, flexibility, supervisory guidance
	New life partner's support	4	Understanding, emotional reassurance, practical help, advice
Adaptive coping	Adaptive coping	8	Problem solving, positive reframing, support seeking, work engagement, exercise, acceptance, future planning, hobbies
Maladaptive coping	Maladaptive coping	6	Avoidance, denial, withdrawal, substance use, self-blame, anger
Total		44	

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3.5. Reliability and Validity

In terms of validity, the questionnaire items were developed with reference to established theoretical constructs and relevant empirical literature. The present study focused primarily on assessing internal consistency rather than conducting a separate factor-analytic examination of the underlying measurement structure. Consequently, the reported reliability coefficients should not be interpreted as evidence of construct validity. The absence of formal construct validation constitutes a methodological limitation and should be taken into account when interpreting the observed relationships among the constructs. Future research would benefit from larger samples and more rigorous validation procedures, including formal assessments of content and construct validity and, where appropriate, exploratory or confirmatory factor analysis.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed with IBM SPSS Statistics. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, SDs) summarized demographics and study variables. Cronbach's alpha assessed internal consistency. Pearson correlations examined relationships among social support, adaptive coping, maladaptive coping, and emotional recovery. Multiple linear regression tested the statistical contributions of social support and coping on emotional recovery. Independent-samples t-tests assessed gender differences. Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Demographic Profile of the Sample

Among 100 respondents, 59% were female and 41% male. Majority of the respondents (43.0%) fell within the 35-45 age group, followed by 45-55 (24.0%), 25-35 (23.0%), and 18-25 (10.0%). The majority of 61.0% were in full-time employment, with 28.0% self-employed and 11.0% in part-time work. In terms of time since divorce, 34.0% respondents had divorced within the past year, 28.0% within one to three years, 14.0% within three to five years, and 24.0% more than five years earlier.

4.2. Reliability of the Scale

The internal consistency of the study constructs was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The coefficients ranged from 0.781 to 0.981, exceeding the commonly accepted minimum threshold of 0.700. Emotional recovery demonstrated very high internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.981$), followed by social support ($\alpha = 0.961$) and adaptive coping ($\alpha = 0.935$). Maladaptive coping demonstrated acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.781$). These results indicate that the measurement scales demonstrated satisfactory to very high internal consistency.

Table 2: Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's Alpha Analysis			
Variable	**No. of Items**	**α**	**Reliability Level**
Emotional recovery	15	0.981	Excellent
Social support	15	0.961	Excellent
Adaptive coping	8	0.935	Excellent
Maladaptive coping	6	0.781	Acceptable

4.3 Descriptive Level

Emotional recovery items produced mean scores ranging from 2.93 to 3.40 (on the 5-point scale), indicating a moderate overall level of recovery; the highest-scoring items were personal growth (M = 3.40), improved self-esteem (M = 3.38), and hope for the future (M = 3.35), while feeling emotionally stable (M = 2.93) and reduced anxiety (M = 2.96) scored lowest. Social support was rated moderately across all four sources, with friends' support (M range 3.33-3.48) and family support (M range 3.15-3.46) rated somewhat higher than colleague/workplace support (M range 2.86-3.09). New life partner support ranged from M = 3.23 to 3.45. Adaptive coping strategies were used more frequently (M range 2.85-3.61, highest for future planning) than maladaptive coping strategies (M range 2.19-3.37, highest for denial of the divorce's impact and lowest for substance use).

4.4. Correlation Analysis

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Results

Correlation Results				
Relationship	**r**	**Strength**	**p**	**Significance**
Social support - Emotional recovery	0.504	Moderate	<0.001	Significant
Family support - Emotional recovery	0.444	Moderate	<0.001	Significant
Friends' support - Emotional recovery	0.584	Moderate	<0.001	Significant

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Colleague/workplace support - Emotional recovery	0.358	Moderate	<0.001	Significant
New life partner's support - Emotional recovery	0.401	Moderate	<0.001	Significant
Adaptive coping - Emotional recovery	0.576	Moderate	<0.001	Significant
Maladaptive coping - Emotional recovery	0.076	Very weak	0.450	Not significant
Social support - Coping strategies	0.882	Strong	<0.001	Significant

A particularly notable finding was the strong positive correlation between overall social support and coping strategies ($r = 0.882$, $p < 0.001$). Although these constructs are conceptually distinct, the magnitude of this association suggests substantial empirical overlap within the present sample. This finding warrants cautious interpretation, as several coping items relate to support-seeking or interpersonal resources, while the social support measure directly assesses perceived assistance and reassurance from interpersonal sources. Consequently, some degree of shared variance may stem from the manner in which the constructs were operationalized. While this high correlation does not imply that the constructs are identical, it does indicate that their independent contributions should be interpreted with care. Accordingly, the subsequent regression results are considered in light of this substantial association, rather than treating the predictors as entirely independent constructs.

4.5. Multiple Regression Analysis

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine whether social support, adaptive coping, and maladaptive coping significantly predicted emotional recovery. The overall regression model was statistically significant, $F(3, 96) = 21.931$, $p < 0.001$, and explained 40.7% of the variance in emotional recovery ($R^2 = 0.407$; adjusted $R2 = 0.388$). Adaptive coping was a significant positive predictor of emotional recovery ($B = 0.642$, $\beta = 0.511$, $t = 3.247$, $p = 0.002$), whereas maladaptive coping was a significant negative predictor ($B = -0.539$, $\beta = -0.347$, $t = -3.469$, $p < 0.001$). Social support was not a statistically significant independent predictor ($B = 0.373$, $\beta = 0.275$, $t = 1.587$, $p = 0.116$). The VIF values ranged from 1.618 to 4.848, remaining below 5.000.

Table 4: Regression Coefficients (Dependent Variable: Emotional Recovery

Regression Results					
Predictor	**B**	**Beta**	**t**	**p**	**VIF**
Social support	0.373	0.275	1.587	0.116	4.848
Adaptive coping	0.642	0.511	3.247	0.002	4.013
Maladaptive coping	-0.539	-0.347	-3.469	<0.001	1.618

The multiple regression model was statistically significant, $F(3, 96) = 21.931$, $p < 0.001$, and accounted for 40.7% of the variance in emotional recovery ($R^2 = 0.407$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.388$). Adaptive coping made a statistically significant positive contribution to emotional recovery ($\beta = 0.511$, $p = 0.002$), whereas maladaptive coping made a statistically negative contribution ($\beta = -0.347$, $p < 0.001$). In contrast, social support did not make a statistically significant unique contribution to emotional recovery after controlling for the coping variables ($\beta = 0.275$, $p = 0.116$).

The discrepancy between the bivariate and regression findings for social support is noteworthy. Social support was significantly associated with emotional recovery when examined in isolation ($r = 0.504$, $p < 0.001$), but its coefficient was no longer statistically significant when coping variables were entered simultaneously. This suggests that the association observed at the bivariate level did not translate into a significant independent contribution after accounting for coping. The strong correlation between social support and coping strategies ($r = 0.882$) provides important context for interpreting this result, as it indicates substantial shared variance among the predictors. Although all variance inflation factor (VIF) values were below 5.00, suggesting that the conventional threshold for severe multicollinearity was not exceeded, the magnitude of the predictor correlation still warrants caution in interpreting the regression coefficients as reflecting wholly independent effects. Accordingly, the regression results should be understood as conditional statistical associations rather than as evidence of causal effects.

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4.6. Gender Differences in Study Variable

Table 5: Independent-Samples t-Test Results by Gender (n = 41 males, 59 females

Gender Differences				
Variable	**Male Mean (SD)**	**Female Mean (SD)**	**t**	**p**
Emotional recovery	3.570 (1.162)	2.968 (1.114)	2.612	0.010
Social support	3.471 (0.499)	3.132 (1.021)	2.203	0.030
Coping strategies	3.360 (0.298)	2.950 (0.904)	3.242	0.002

Independent-samples t-tests were conducted to examine whether emotional recovery, social support, and coping scores differed by gender. The results revealed a statistically significant difference in emotional recovery between male and female respondents, with male respondents reporting a higher mean score (M = 3.570, SD = 1.162) than female respondents (M = 2.968, SD = 1.114), t = 2.612, p = 0.010. A statistically significant gender difference was also observed in social support, with male respondents reporting a higher mean score (M = 3.471) than female respondents (M = 3.132), t = 2.203, p = 0.030. Similarly, a statistically significant difference was found in coping scores, with male respondents reporting a higher mean score (M = 3.360) than female respondents (M = 2.950), t = 3.242, p = 0.002. These findings indicate that male and female respondents in the present sample differed significantly in emotional recovery, social support, and coping scores. However, these differences should be interpreted as sample-specific findings and should not be taken as evidence that gender itself determines emotional recovery, social support, or coping. The study did not directly assess the social, cultural, economic, family, or workplace factors that might help to explain these differences.

4.7 Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Table 6: Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis Summary	
Hypothesis	**Result**
H1: Social support is significantly associated with emotional recovery after divorce among employed men and women in Colombo District	Supported (r = 0.504, p < 0.001)
H2: Adaptive coping strategies significantly predict emotional recovery	Supported (β = 0.511, p = 0.002)
H3: Maladaptive coping strategies significantly predict emotional recovery	Supported (β = -0.347, p < 0.001)
H4: Social support is significantly associated with the coping strategies used	Supported (r = 0.882, p < 0.001)
H5: Emotional recovery after divorce differs significantly by gender	Supported (t = 2.612, p = 0.010)

Table 6 summarizes the results of the hypothesis testing. All five hypotheses were supported. Social support was significantly and positively associated with emotional recovery after divorce (r = 0.504, p < 0.001) and with coping strategies (r = 0.882, p <0.001). Adaptive coping significantly and positively predicted emotional recovery (β = 0.511, p = 0.002), whereas maladaptive coping significantly and negatively predicted emotional recovery (β = -0.347, p < 0.001). Furthermore, the independent-samples t-test indicated a statistically significant gender difference in emotional recovery (t = 2.162, p = 0.010). Overall, the findings highlight the relevance of social support and coping strategies in explaining emotional recovery among employed divorced men and women in Colombo District.

5. Discussion

Consistent with the Stress and Coping Theory and the Buffering Hypothesis, the findings confirm that both social support and coping strategies are meaningfully related to emotional recovery after divorce. The moderate overall level of emotional recovery observed, together with comparatively higher scores for personal growth and self-esteem than for emotional stability and reduced anxiety, suggests that recovery among employed divorced individuals in Colombo District is an ongoing process rather than a completed state, consistent with prior evidence that post-divorce adjustment unfolds gradually (Amato, 2010; Sbarra & Emery, 2005).

Friends' support showed the strongest bivariate relationship with emotional recovery among the sources of support examined, ahead of family, new partner, and workplace support, pointing to the particular value of peer relationships during this period. Family and workplace support remained positively related to recovery. However, relatively weaker association observed for workplace support may reflect differences in the availability or perceived adequacy of

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workplace-based support. This interpretation requires further investigation.

An important finding concerns the differing results for social support in the bivariate and multiple regression analyses. Social support showed a statistically significant positive association with emotional recovery when examined alone ($r = 0.504$, $p < 0.001$). However, when adaptive and maladaptive coping were entered simultaneously into the regression model, social support was no longer a statistically significant independent predictor ($\beta = 0.275$, $p = 0.116$). This does not imply that social support was unrelated to emotional recovery. Rather, it suggests that the portion of variance in emotional recovery associated with social support overlapped substantially with the variance explained by coping variables, such that social support did not yield a statistically significant unique regression coefficient in this sample. The strong association between social support and coping strategies ($r = 0.882$) is particularly relevant to this interpretation. While the theoretical framework posits that social support and coping are interconnected, the present cross-sectional analysis cannot determine whether social support influences coping, coping shapes perceptions or use of support, or whether other unmeasured factors contribute to both. Formal mediation or longitudinal analyses would therefore be needed to elucidate the mechanisms underlying these relationships.

The strong correlation between social support and coping strategies ($r = 0.882$) also has implications for the interpretation of the study's conceptual model. The finding suggests that respondents who reported greater perceived support also tended to report coping strategies at substantially higher levels. One possible explanation is that some forms of coping, particularly support-seeking, are inherently interpersonal and may therefore overlap with perceptions of available social support. At the same time, the magnitude of the correlation indicates that the operationalization of the constructs may have captured overlapping aspects of respondents' post-divorce experiences. The present study cannot determine whether this reflects substantive theoretical interconnectedness, measurement overlap, or both. Future studies should therefore use more clearly differentiated measurement instruments and formal tests of discriminant validity before treating social support and coping as fully independent constructs in multivariable models.

The independent-samples t-test revealed statistically significant gender differences in emotional recovery, with male respondents reporting a higher mean score than female respondents in this sample ($t = 2.612$, $p = 0.010$). Significant gender differences were also observed in reported social support and coping scores. These findings should be understood as differences observed within the study sample, rather than as evidence that gender itself determines emotional recovery, social support, or coping effectiveness. A range of contextual factors may help to explain these gender differences, including variations in social expectations, caregiving responsibilities, access to support networks, economic circumstances, workplace experiences, and culturally shaped responses to marital dissolution. However, the present study did not directly measure these factors and therefore cannot identify them as definitive explanations for the observed differences. Further research employing larger and more diverse samples, along with measures of relevant social and cultural variables, would be needed to examine the mechanisms underlying gender-related variation in post-divorce adjustment.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1. Conclusions

This study examined the relationships among social support, coping strategies, and emotional recovery among employed divorced men and women in Colombo District. The findings indicated a moderate level of emotional recovery within the sample. Social support was positively associated with emotional recovery in the bivariate analysis, as was adaptive coping. Maladaptive coping was not significantly associated with emotional recovery at the bivariate level but exhibited a significant negative coefficient in the multiple regression model when the other predictors were statistically controlled. The discrepancy between the bivariate and regression findings suggests that social support did not make a statistically significant unique contribution to emotional recovery once coping variables were included in the model.

The strong association between social support and coping strategies further indicates that these constructs share substantial variance in the present sample, and that their independent statistical contributions should therefore be interpreted with caution. Significant gender differences were observed in emotional recovery, social support, and coping scores. However, these differences should be understood as sample-specific findings rather than as evidence of inherent gender-based differences. Overall, the study provides context-specific evidence regarding the relationships among social support, coping strategies, and emotional recovery among employed divorced individuals in Colombo District. Given the cross-sectional design, purposive sampling, relatively small sample size, reliance on self-reported measures, and substantial overlap between social support and coping, the findings should not be interpreted as establishing causal relationships or as representative of all employed divorced individuals in Sri Lanka.

6.2. Practical Implications

The findings carry several practical implications for professionals and organisations that support employed divorced individuals. The significant association between adaptive coping and emotional recovery, together with its significant contribution in the multiple regression model, suggests that support services may benefit from incorporating coping-oriented approaches that encourage constructive responses to post-divorce challenges. Such approaches might include future planning, acceptance, positive reframing,

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emotional regulation, and problem-solving. However, given the cross-sectional nature of the study, these findings should be regarded as areas for practical consideration rather than as evidence that such approaches directly cause improved emotional recovery.

The findings underscore the relevance of social support in the context of post-divorce adjustment, while also indicating that its independent statistical contribution should be interpreted in conjunction with coping variables. Although social support was positively associated with emotional recovery in the bivariate analysis, it did not make a statistically significant unique contribution when coping variables were included in the regression model. Consequently, counsellors, community organisations, and employee support services may wish to address not only the availability of social support but also the ways in which individuals perceive, access, and utilise that support. The strong correlation between social support and coping strategies ($r = 0.882$) further suggests that these dimensions should not necessarily be treated as entirely independent when designing support programmes.

The findings have implications for workplaces. Workplace support was positively associated with emotional recovery, although its correlation was weaker than those observed for family and friend support. Employers may therefore consider maintaining supportive workplace environments for employees undergoing major personal transitions such as divorce. Measures such as accessible employee assistance services, appropriate supervisor support, reasonable flexibility where organizationally feasible, and confidential avenues for seeking assistance may help employees balance personal and work-related demands. These measures should be viewed as supportive organizational practices rather than as interventions whose effectiveness has been established by the present study.

The observed gender difference in emotional recovery suggests that practitioners and organisations should remain attentive to potentially different experiences among employed divorced men and women. The present findings do not identify the reasons for this difference; therefore, support programmes should avoid assuming that all divorced individuals have identical emotional or social needs. Instead, practitioners may consider individual circumstances, available support networks, workplace conditions, and coping patterns when providing assistance.

Finally, the findings may be relevant to community and professional organisations involved in post-divorce support in Colombo District. Collaboration among counsellors, workplace support services, community organisations, and relevant social-support networks could offer individuals opportunities to access both interpersonal support and coping-related resources. Future research employing longitudinal designs and formally validated measures would be valuable for determining whether these practical approaches are associated with changes in emotional recovery over time.

6.3. Limitations

Several limitations should be borne in mind when interpreting the findings. The cross-sectional design allows for the examination of statistical associations at a single point in time but does not establish temporal order or causality. Accordingly, the observed relationships among social support, coping strategies, and emotional recovery should not be interpreted as causal effects. The study employed purposive, non-probability sampling and included 100 employed divorced individuals from Colombo District. Because participants were recruited through professional networks and referrals, and no comprehensive sampling frame was available, the sample may not be representative of the broader population of employed divorced adults in Sri Lanka. The findings should therefore be generalised to other contexts with caution. The study relied on self-reported questionnaire responses. Such responses may have been influenced by individual interpretation, recall biases, social desirability, or the sensitive nature of divorce-related experiences. Although the measures demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency, the study did not conduct a separate, formal factor-analytic assessment of construct validity. In addition, the strong correlation between social support and coping strategies ($r = 0.882$) points to substantial empirical overlap between these measures in the present sample. This limits the extent to which their independent statistical contributions can be interpreted without qualification.

The study did not formally test mediation or other longitudinal mechanisms through which social support and coping may be related to emotional recovery. Future research would benefit from larger, probability-based or systematically recruited samples where feasible, longitudinal designs, formally validated measurement instruments, and mediation or structural modelling approaches to examine the temporal and theoretical relationships among the constructs.

7. Recommendations

In light of the observed associations, practitioners and organizations may consider strengthening accessible support structures for employed individuals experiencing divorce, drawing on family, peer, and workplace sources of support. Attention may also be directed toward coping-oriented support that encourages constructive problem-solving, acceptance, future planning, and other adaptive responses. However, these recommendations should be viewed as considerations for practice rather than as interventions whose effectiveness has been established by the present cross-sectional study. Future research should evaluate such approaches using longitudinal or intervention-based designs.

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