

## Summary

Late adolescence/young adulthood is characterised by turbulence and major life transitions, and individuals in this life stage are confronted with stressors on a daily basis (Santrock, 2003). This situation necessitates adequate coping so that these young people can negotiate the transition between childhood and adulthood successfully. Health practitioners and educators need to establish ways to enhance adequate coping in young people in order to minimise their stress and ward off negative and unwanted consequences of stressors; consequences such as addictions, suicide, depression and other pathologies (Frydenberg & Lewis, 2004; Puskar, Hoover & Miewald, 1992). Research shows that more and more young people are reporting that their lives seem hopeless and meaningless (Santrock, 2003). Clearly it is beneficial to investigate the relationship between meaning, well-being and coping with stress in young adults.



Past research has investigated meaning in life and sense of coherence and other well-being measures on adults who have already established themselves, and very specific samples, such as elderly people, the terminally ill and employees in the workplace (for example Marais & Stuart, 2005; Shek, 2003; Strümpfer & Mlonzi, 2001; Yiu-Kee & Tang, 2005). However, researchers have debated the extent to which any real progress has been made in the field of stress and coping (see Coyne & Racioppo, 2000; Lazarus, 2000; Lewis & Frydenberg, 2002; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Somerfield & McCrae, 2000). These and other studies have been critically evaluated in the current study, and it is clear that research is needed on meaning in life and well-being in late adolescence/young adulthood in order to assess how young people cope with stressors. Furthermore, research is needed on young people in South

Africa, in order to ascertain how they cope with stressors that may be country-specific.

The overall aim of the study was to establish whether there are relationships between meaning in life, sense of coherence and the ability to cope in young adults. More specifically, the study aimed to ascertain whether the extent to which an individual has discovered meaning in life and the extent to which he/she has developed a sense of coherence predicts coping with stress in a late adolescent/young adult population.

A quantitative research methodology was conducted on a sample of male and female young adults (N=258). The participants were selected from a tertiary institution and had an average age range of 17 to 21 years. The measurement instruments have been used in previous research and were deemed culturally fair with valid and reliable psychometric properties. All three questionnaires were self-report measures. In order to assess the extent to which an individual has found meaning in their lives, the Purpose in Life Test (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1981) was used. To ascertain whether or not an individual had developed a strong sense of coherence, the Orientation to Life questionnaire, also known as the Sense of Coherence scale (Antonovsky, 1987) was used. The Adolescent Coping Scale (Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993) was used to determine the ability to cope in young people.

Various statistical analyses were conducted on the raw data collected from the questionnaires. Factor analyses were conducted to determine the internal validity and reliability of the measuring instruments. The distribution of the data within the subscales was tested for normality. Analysis of variance was used to determine

whether certain biographical variables could account for any differences in meaning in life, sense of coherence and ability to cope. Pearson product moment correlations were used. Thereafter both multiple regression and logistic regression were performed to determine if meaning in life and sense of coherence can predict differences in ability to cope.

The results indicate that the constructs explored, as measured by the questionnaires, were not influenced by the age, gender, home language or direction of study of the participants. The sample could therefore be regarded as fairly homogeneous and the effect of confounding variables limited. However, as a result of this homogeneity, the findings of this study cannot necessarily be generalised to other populations.

Findings indicate that there are relationships between meaning in life and the ability to cope. This finding points to the possibility that the extent to which an individual has discovered meaning in life, or the extent to which an individual views his or her life as meaningful is related to his or her ability to select effective coping strategies.

Furthermore it was found that there are relationships between sense of coherence as well as the individual components of sense of coherence, namely comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness, and the ability to cope. This finding suggests that the extent to which an individual has developed a sense of coherence is related to his or her ability to select effective coping strategies.

Overall, it can be concluded that relationships between meaning in life, sense of coherence and the ability to cope do exist. Furthermore, it has been shown that the

extent to which a person has discovered meaning in life and the extent to which a person has developed a sense of coherence or the degree to which individuals perceive life as comprehensible, manageable and meaningful are accurate predictors of whether or not they will be able to select effective coping strategies.

The interpretation of these results should be employed with caution as the sample was fairly homogeneous. Although the current study investigated young peoples' ability to cope with stressors, no attempt was made to determine what these stressors are and research is needed in order to identify what leads to stress in late adolescence/young adulthood. Again, this is particularly important for the South African population as the stressors that individuals from this country are confronted with may differ from the concerns and difficulties faced by young adults in other countries.

Future research should conduct similar statistical techniques using the same variables with diverse samples in order to ascertain differences among individuals. It would also be beneficial for future research to focus on the implementation of intervention strategies that enhance well-being, including meaning in life and sense of coherence in order to facilitate adaptive coping in young adults in tertiary education and other environments.

## Opsomming

Die lewensstadium van adolessenasie of jong volwasseheid word gekenmerk deur opstandigheid en 'n omvangryke lewensoorgaanstydperk, soos wat hulle op 'n daaglikse basis gekonfronteer word met spanning en stres (Santrock, 2003). Hierdie situasie vereis behoorlike hantering sodat dië jong volwassenes die oorgang tussen kinderjare en volwasseheid suksesvol kan hanteer. Gesondheidspraktisyns en opvoedkundiges moet riglyne daarstel om behoorlike hantering van die oorgangstydperk by jong volwassenes te verbeter ten einde stres en spanning te verminder, en om negatiewe en ongewenste gevolge van stres en spanning af te weer, soos verslawing, selfmoord, depressie en ander patologiee (Frydenberg & Lewis, 2004). Navorsing toon dat meer en meer jong volwassenes aandui dat hulle lewens leeg en betekeloos blyk te wees (Santrock, 2003) Dit is dus ongetwyfeld voordelig om die verhouding tussen welsyn en hantering van stres by jong volwassenes te ondersoek.



Onlangse navorsing het die betekenis of sin van die lewe, samehangendheidsin en ander welsynsmaatreëls op volwassenes wat reeds gevestig is, en op baie spesifieke steekproewe soos b.v. oumense, terminale siekes en werknemers in die werkplek gedoen (by voorbeeld Mariais & Stuart, 2005; Shek, 2003; Strümpfer & Mlonzi, 2001; Yiu-Kee & Tang, 2005). Nogtans debatteer navorsers die omvang van die eintlike vordering gemaak in die gebied van stres en die hantering daarvan (Coyne & Racioppo, 2000; Lazarus, 2000; Lewis & Frydenberg, 2002; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Somerfield & McCrae, 2000). Hierdie, sowel as ander studies is krities in ag geneem gedurende die huidige studie, en dit word al hoe duideliker dat navorsing oor lewenswaardigheid en welstand tydens adolessensie

noodsaaklik is om te bepaal hoe jongmense opgewasse is teen stres faktore. Navorsing oor jong Suid-Afrikaners is ook nodig, om te bepaal hoe hulle stresfaktore hanteer wat dalk landspesifiek is.

Die algemene doel van die studie was om te bepaal of daar 'n verband is tussen sin van die lewe, samehangendheidsin en die vermoë om opgewasse te wees in jong volwassenheid. Meer spesifiek, die studie is daarop gemik om te bepaal of die mate waarin 'n individu se sin van die lewe en die mate van samehangendheidsin, 'n aanduiding gee van hoe jong volwassenes stresfaktore hanteer.

'n Kwantitatiewe navorsingsmetode is uitgevoer op manlike en vroulike jong volwassenes (N=258). Deelnemers met 'n gemiddelde ouderdom van tussen 17 en 21 jaar oud is gekies vanuit 'n tersiëre instansie. Die meetinstrumente wat gebruik is, is in vorige navorsing ook gebruik en is as kultureel regverdig, en het geldige en betroubare psigometriese eienskappe. Drie self-verslaggewende vraelyste is gebruik. Die "Purpose in Life Test" (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1981) is gebruik om te bepaal in welke mate 'n individu sy/haar betekenis of doel in die lewe ontdek het. Om te bepaal of 'n individu 'n sterk gevoel van samehangendheidsin ontwikkel het, is die "Orientation to Life" vraelys (ook bekend as die "Sense of Coherence Scale" Antonovsky, 1987) gebruik. "The Adolescent Coping Scale" (Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993) is gebruik om die opgewassendheid van die deelnemers te bepaal.

Verskeie statistiese ontledings is uitgevoer op die rou data ingesamel deur middel van die vraelyste. Faktorontledings is uitgevoer om die interne geldigheid en betroubaarheid van die meetinstrumente te bepaal. Die verspreiding van die data in

die subskale is getoets vir normaliteit. Analise van variansie is gebruik om te bepaal of biografiese veranderlikes enigsins kon bydra tot verskille in sin van die lewe, samehangendheidsin en die vermoë om opgewasse te wees teen die stresfaktore. Daarna is meervoudige regressie sowel as logistiese regressie uitgevoer om te bepaal of lewensbetekenis en samehangendheidsin, verskille kan voorspel in die vermoë om die stres te hanteer. Die Pearsons produk korrelasie is gebruik. Daarna is meervoudige regressie en logistiese regressie gebruik om die hantering van stres te voorspel.

Die resultate dui aan dat die uiteengesitte konstrunkte, soos gemeet in die vraelyste, nie beïnvloed is deur ouderdom, geslag, taal of studierigting van die deelnemers nie. Die steekproef kon derhalwe as redelik homogeen gesien word en die effek van konformerende veranderlikes kon beperk word. Nieteenstaande, as gevolg van hierdie homogeniteit kan die resultate van hierdie studie nie veralgemeen word met ander populasiegroepe nie.



Resultate dui daarop dat daar 'n verhouding bestaan tussen sin van die lewe en die vermoë om stress te hanteer. Hierdie bevinding dui op die moontlikheid dat die mate waarin 'n persoon hul sin van die lewe ontdek het, of die mate waarop 'n individu sy/haar lewe as betekensvol beskou, gekoppel is aan sy/haar vermoë om effektiewe hanteringstrategie te kies.

Daar is verder gevind dat daar verband is tussen samehangendheidsin sowel as individuele aspekte van samehangendheidsin, naamlik verstaanbaarheid, beheer en betekenisvolheid en die vermoë om stres te hanteer. Hierdie resultate dui daarop aan

dat die mate waarop 'n individu sy/haar samehangendheidsin beskou, gekoppel is aan sy/haar vermoë om effektiewe hanteringsstrategie te kies.

Ter afsluiting kan daar afgelui word, dat 'n verwantskap tussen die sin van die lewe, samehangendheidsin en die vermoë om stress te hanteer, wel bestaan. Verder is daar bewys dat die mate waarop 'n persoon die betekenis van hul lewe ontdek het, en die mate waarop hy/sy samehangendheidsin ontdek het, of die mate waarop individue hul lewe as verstaanbaar, hanteerbaar en betekenisvol ag, 'n akurate aanduiding van hul vermoë om effektiewe hanteringsstrategie te kies is.

Die interpretasie van hierdie resultate behoort met sorg toegepas te word, omrede die steekproef redelik homogenies was. Alhoewel die huidige studie daarop gemik was om jong volwassenes se vermoë om stresfaktore te hanteer te bepaal, is daar geensins gepoog om die omvang van hierdie stresfaktore te bepaal nie, en verdere navorsing is nodig om te identifiseer wat aanleiding gee tot stres in jong volwassenes. Weereens, is dit belangrik vir die Suid-Afrikaanse bevolking, aangesien die stresfaktore wat individue van hierdie land die hoof bied moontlik kan verskil van die bekommernisse en moeilikhede wat jong volwassenes in ander lande trotseer.

Soortgelyke navorsing met vergelykbare statistiese tegnieke en veranderlikes met diverse steekproewe moet gedoen word, ten einde individuele verskille te bepaal. Dit sal ook voordelig vir verdere navorsing wees om te fokus op die uitvoering van intervensie strategie wat welstand, sin van die lewe en samehangendheid insluit, om sodoende aanwendbare beheermaatreëls vir jong volwassenes in tersiëre opvoedingskontekste en ander omgewings daar te stel.