THE EXPERIENCE OF NON COPING ON MIDDLE MANAGEMENT LEVEL

by

HERMANUS LOUIS ROYTHORNE-JACOBS

submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the subject

INDUSTRIAL PSYCHOLOGY

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: PROF P J VISSER

JUNE 2000
****

To my wife
Valma Banks Roythorne-Jacobs

CONTENTS   Page

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The general aim of this research was to investigate the phenomenon of non coping among individuals on middle management level, directed by the paradigm of salutogenesis, and more specifically, the concept of Sense of Coherence. The Sense of Coherence questionnaire of Antonovsky (1987) was applied as a measuring instrument in order to determine the various levels of respondents regarding Sense of Coherence. This was followed by semi-structured interviews with an identified case series, followed by an integration of results.

Research information derived from the total scores indicated an even distribution along the continuum of the instrument's scale. During the qualitative study, all individuals representing the case series experienced similar levels of stress, though various coping strategies apply.

Although all individuals representing the case series attempt to cope, a tendency towards non coping or maladaptive coping occurred due to the influence of various sources of managerial stress such as insufficient training.

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

1.1 BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION OF THIS RESEARCH

Psychology as science deals with the human nature and more specifically, human behaviour. As an applied science, Industrial Psychology deals with human behaviour within the workplace. This takes many forms, for example personnel psychology, ergonomics, consumer psychology and industrial mental health.

One of the core components of any organisation is its human resource asset. The field of this research will be personnel psychology with the emphasis on industrial mental health.

The focus of this research will be the experience of stress with particular focus on non coping in the workplace. According to Ivancevich and Matteson (1993) much of the stress experienced by individuals originate in organisations. Stress means different things to different people. For the business executive stress might constitute frustration or emotional tension, whilst for the security guard it might constitute a problem regarding alertness and concentration.

However, most definitions of stress recognise the individual and environment in terms of a stimulus interaction, response interaction or stimulus-response interaction.

At this point it is necessary to define certain aspects surrounding coping, especially stressors, strain, stress resistance and coping itself. According to Hobfoll (1988) stressors are events that occur within the environment or in the body that make an emotional or task demand on the individual, which strain the response manifested by certain individuals (including psychological strain such as depression or anxiety). For the purpose of limiting such strain, they resist the stress caused by the stressors (Hobfoll, 1988). According to Hobfoll (1988) this should not be confused with coping. Coping can be defined as "... behaviors that are employed for the purpose of reducing strain in the face of stressors" (Hobfoll, 1988, p.16).

1.2   PROBLEM STATEMENT

The effects of stress are many and varied. Whilst some effects are positive (for example self-motivation, stimulation to work harder, an increased inspiration towards a better life), others are disruptive and potentially dangerous.

According to Ivancevich and Matteson (1993) the following potential consequences of the effect of stress have been identified through previous research in this field:

- subjective effects (for example anxiety, aggression, fatigue, frustration, temperamental behaviour and low self-esteem)
- behavioural effects such as accident proned, alcoholism, temper outbursts and impulsive behaviour
- cognitive effects such as indecision, poor concentration, short attention span, hypersensitivity to criticism
- organisational effects such as absenteeism, staff turnover, low productivity, alienation from co-workers, job dissatisfaction, reduced commitment and loyalty
- physiological effects (for example increased heart rate and blood pressure, dryness of the mouth, sweating, increased blood glucose level)

Since much of the stress experienced by individuals originate in organisations, they may be unable to cope, due to various work-related issues. In order to understand the impact of the experience of non coping on industrial metal health, it is important to investigate the phenomenon of non coping of individuals, especially on managerial level.

The research problem can be stated as follows:

How do individuals experience the phenomenon of non coping on middle management level ?

<u>Subsidiary questions</u>

* Which particular stressors in the workplace contribute to the experience of non coping?

* What consequences are experienced as result of non coping in the workplace?

* What role do individual characteristics such as sense of coherence, personality hardiness, potency, stamina, learned resourcefulness and locus of control play in terms of non coping ?

1.3 AIMS

1.3.1 General aim

With reference to the above formulation of the problem, the general aim of this research is to investigate the phenomenon of non coping among individuals in the workplace on middle management level.

1.3.2 Specific aims

Specific aims can be divided into aims for the literature review and the empirical study.

1.3.2 (a) Specific aims : Literature review

* to provide a theoretical framework (relevant model and definitions) regarding the concept of stress and more specific, non coping, within the boundaries of the paradigm of salutogenesis

1.3.2 (b) Specific aims : Empirical study

* to investigate the phenomenon of non coping in the workplace on middle management level

- to investigate the extent to which non coping influences industrial mental health on middle management level

1.4   WHY MIDDLE MANAGEMENT ?

An organisation provides for a variety of business units, each requiring a general manager, a process which in most cases extends into several levels within the organisation such as group, division, department. The middle manager can be regarded as the general manager responsible for a particular business unit at the intermediate level of the corporate hierarchy (Uyterhoeven, 1991).

At middle management level the management of relationships is a threefold task, namely:

- acting as subordinate towards higher authority
- acting as equal among peers
- acting as superior

As result, the middle manager wears three hats, which can be most demanding and it is difficult to arrive at a consistent pattern of behaviour (Uyterhoeven, 1991).

Furthermore, according to Frohman & Johnson (1993) a shift in roles is required from middle management. Traditionally, the role was that of coordination, translation and to act as go-between. More recently new roles emerged such as to become an initiator, offer more leadership, accept the challenge of taking the initiative, control emotional barriers to taking charge and to take responsibility instead of waiting for delegation.

Previous research in the field of work stress examined the prevalence of work stressors among lower, middle and upper management levels (Cooper & Payne, 1995). According to Cooper and Payne (1995) middle-managers reported significantly more stress than lower and upper management.

1.5 THE PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE

This research is directed by a specific paradigm and an appropriate theoretical model.

1.5.1 The paradigm of salutogenesis

The paradigm applicable to this dissertation of limited scope will be that of Salutogenesis as explained by Strümpfer (1990). Salutogenesis emphasizes the origins of health, or wellness and is derived from the Latin word "salus" meaning health and the Greek word "genesis" meaning origins (Strümpfer, 1990). The following constructs form part of this paradigm:

- sense of coherence
- personality hardiness
- potency
- stamina
- learned resourcefulness

The main aspect dealt with here is how individuals handle stress and remain well healthwise. Other constructs related to salutogenesis are:

- internal - external locus of control
- personal causation
- self - directedness
- self - efficacy and human agency
- social interest
- sense of humour

According to Strümpfer (1990) it is important to understand that stressors are omnipresent, and can be classified in various categories, with the category of importance to this research being endemic stress. Endemic stress refers to "...a condition of continuous and manifold changes, demands, threats, or deprivations,

frequently small in scale and embedded in daily events" (Strümpfer, 1990, p. 266). The origins to endemic stress can be found in economic, political, social, physical and psychological environments.

1.5.1 (a)   Sense of coherence

In order to cope with the demands of stress individuals make use of generalized resistance resources (Strümpfer, 1990). This concept facilitates effective tension management in any situation. According to Strümpfer (1990) resources include the following:

- physical and biochemical resources
- artifactual material resources (including money, food and clothes - thus wealth)
- cognitive resources (for example knowledge and skills)
- emotional resources of ego identity
- coping strategies (plans of action to overcome stressors)
- interpersonal-relational resources (including social support and commitment)
- macrosociocultural resources (including answers to problems provided by one's culture and social structure)

The Generalized resistance resources contain all the following important aspects:

- comprehensibility (the extent to which the individual perceives stimuli from within and without)
- manageability (the extent to which events are perceived as experiences which are bearable, can be coped with or, as challenges that can be met)
- meaningfulness (the extent to which the individual feels that life makes sense emotionally rather than cognitively)

1.5.1 (b)   Hardiness

Hardiness can be seen as a global personality construct moderating stress-health relationships, consisting of commitment, control and challenge (Strümpfer, 1990). *Commitment* refers to a belief in the truth, importance and value of what one is what one does., as well as the tendency to involve oneself actively in many of life's situations. Commitment stands in contrast to alienation. *Control* refers to the tendency to believe and act as if life events can be influenced by oneself. This correlates with the terms internal versus external locus of control. Control can be seen as the opposite to feelings of powerlessness. *Challenge* in contrast to threat refers to the expectation that change (rather than stability) is the norm in life.

1.5.1 (c)   Potency

Potency refers to enduring confidence in one's own capacities as well as confidence and commitment (Strümpfer, 1990). According to Strümpfer (1990) unsuccessful past coping experiences can result in weak potency.

1.5.1 (d)   Stamina

According to Strümpfer (1990) stamina refers to the inherent physical and moral strength of an individual to resist disease, fatigue or hardship.

1.5.2 A working model for stress and work

In order to illustrate the link between stressors, stress and consequences, it is important to develop an integrative model of stress and work. An appropriate model in this regard is the working model as illustrated by Ivancevich and Matteson (1993). For the purposes of this research the model has been adapted as presented in figure 1.

The model was selected since it concentrates on work-related issues. It divides stressors into the following categories:

- individual stressors

- group stressors

- organisational stressors

INDIVIDUAL STRESSORS Role conflict, role ambiguity, work overload, responsibility for people, lack or career progress, and job design GROUP STRESSORS Poor relationship with peers, subordinates and boss ORGANISATIONAL STRESSORS Lack of participation, organisational structure, occupational level, and lack of clear policies	Psychological or physical experience or perception of excessive demand on the individual	SUBJECTIVE Anxiety, aggression, fatigue, frustration, loss of temper, low self esteem BEHAVIOURAL Accident proneness, alcoholism, outbursts, impulsive behaviour COGNITIVE Inability to make sound decisions, poor concentration, short attention span, hypersensitivity to criticism PHYSIOLOGICAL Increased heart rate and blood pressure, dryness of mouth, sweating, increased blood glucose level ORGANISATIONAL Absenteeism, increased staff turnover, low productivity, alienation from co-workers, job dissatisfaction, reduced commitment and loyalty

Figure 1: Stress and work: A working model (adapted from Ivancevich & Matteson, 1993, p.246).

The individual experiences these stressors on psychological and/ or physical level, with consequences which includes aspects on subjective, behavioural, cognitive, physiological and organisational level (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1993). It is important to

note that these consequences merely represent some of the potential effects associated with stress and that all individuals will not necessarily experience the same consequences (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1993).

1.6   RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design can be described as the "...arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure." (Mouton & Marais, 1994, p.32). According to Mouton and Marais (1994, p.133) the aim of research design is "... to plan and structure a given research project in such a manner that the eventual validity of the research findings is maximized".

In this research internal validity on contextual level will be ensured by an overview of the phenomenon by means of case studies and in-depth interviews and the external validity on universal level ensured by means of exploratory surveys.

The aim of this design is to ascertain if the specifically chosen - the independent - variable influences another - the dependent - variable. In this research the independent variable is non coping and the dependent variable is individual experience.

The research will be investigative since it will investigate the experience of the phenomenon of non coping by individuals on middle management level. As result, the research will be a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques. The method of qualitative research is appropriate since a phenomenon (non coping) is investigated in order to understand the experience of non coping in the workplace on middle management level. In qualitative research, procedures are not strictly formalised, boundaries are absent and it tends to be more philosophical (Mouton & Marais, 1994). The method of quantitative research is valid because there has been a growing emphasis on combining these approaches during single studies. As quoted in Leedy (1993, p.143) it can be stated that "many studies could be enhanced considerably if a

combined approach were taken".

The investigation will be based upon known theories concerning (a) non coping by individuals and (b) the experience of non coping by individuals. The unit of analysis will be individuals occupying posts on middle management level (Heads of Department and Division level).

1.7   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research will be conducted in the following two phases:

- literature review
- empirical study

1.7.1 Phase 1: Literature review

Phase 1 entails the literature review in the form of descriptive research. This entails the most relevant models and theories presented in an integrated way to serve as background to the empirical study.

During this phase the emphasis will be on the most relevant theories and models with regard to:

- the concept of stress
- coping mechanisms of individuals (or the lack thereof)
- the experience of non coping

1.7.2 Phase 2 : Empirical study

Phase 2 entails the empirical study, consisting of both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Aspects included will be population, measuring instruments, analysis of data, and the procedure involved.

1.7.2 (a)   Population

The study will be based on data collected in a South African Tertiary institution. The institution has its head office in one of the major cities of one of South Africa's nine provinces, with regional facilities in four other provinces. The services of the institution are marketed nationally and to a certain extent, internationally. This study will involve all the employees in the organisation occupying posts on middle management level . In this way the problems emanating from sampling will be effectively avoided.

1.7.2 (b)   Measuring instruments

During this study, the following instruments will be applied:

- written questionnaires
- focus groups or case studies

1.7.2 (b) (i)   Written questionnaires

Since this research will be based on the paradigm of Salutogenesis and more particularly the concept of Sense of Coherence (SOC) as proposed by Antonovsky (1987), the Sense of Coherence questionnaire as published in Antonovsky (1987) will be applied as measuring instrument in order to differentiate between individuals with a low and high SOC.

1.7.2 (b) (ii)   Focus groups or case studies

Focus groups or case studies had been considered (depending on the size of the selected experimental group) in order to investigate the experience of non coping in the workplace.

1.7.2 (b) (iii)   Measurement validity

According to Mouton and Marais (1994) measuring instruments need to be valid in terms of criterion and construct validity.

Criterion validity refers to "... when the purpose is to use an instrument to estimate some important form of behavior that is external to the measuring instrument itself, the latter being referred to as the criterion" (Mouton & Marais, 1994, p.67). According to Mouton and Marais (1994) one form of criterion validity is predictive validity. Measuring instruments to be used in this research satisfy predictive validity since the aim is to predict the impact of non coping on industrial mental health.

Construct validity "... refers to the extent that a scale, index, or a list of items measures the relevant construct and not something else" (Mouton & Marais, 1994, p.68). Measurement instruments of this research satisfy this requirement since it focus on the experience of non coping in the workplace.

1.7.2 (c)   Analysis of data

Collected data will be analysed by applying quantitative and qualitative techniques. Data collected from **questionnaires** will be analysed by applying the quantitative technique of frequency analysis. Statistical processing will include computer packages such as QUATRO PRO (Numeric and graphic tools). Data collected from the **interviews** will be analysed by applying a qualitative technique similar to that of analysing the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT). Underlying theoretical principles to be considered include identifying themes (with due consideration of repetition of themes and unusual wording), frequency of occurrence of an idea and typical methods of problem solving applied by the individual.

1.7.2 (d)   Procedure

The procedure to be followed during the empirical study will involve several steps.

Step 1: Measuring

Questionnaires will be distributed among the population mentioned under 1.7.2 (a), followed by focus groups and semi-structured interviews.

Step 2: Data analysis and statistical processing

Data collected from questionnaires will be analysed by means of frequency analysis, whilst data collected from semi-structured interviews will be analysed by applying the technique similar to that of analysing the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT). Questionnaire responses will be statistically processed with the assistance of a an appropriate computer package (QUATRO PRO - Numeric and graphic tools).

Step 3: Results

Results will be interpreted and reported to the management of the organisation concerned with relevant feedback to respondents.

Step 4: Conclusion

Based on results from data collected, a conclusion will be reached.

Step 5: Limits of the research

Limitations in this research will be included.

Step 6: Recommendations

Based upon results and the conclusion reached, recommendations will be made, possibly including areas or aspects requiring further research.

1.8 CHAPTER DIVISION

The division of chapters in this study will be as follows:

Chapter 1:   Background and motivation, including:

- the aims of this study
- the research design
- method of research

Chapter 2:   Literature review on:

- the concept of stress
- the concept of non coping within the framework of the paradigm of salutogenesis, and more specifically, Sense of Coherence

Chapter 3:   Literature review on:

- the concept of stress in the workplace
- the experience of non coping in the workplace
- the relation between stress/non coping and industrial mental health

Chapter 4:   Research methodology with regard to the empirical study (both quantitative and qualitative)

Chapter 5:   Results

Chapter 6:   Conclusions, recommendations and limitations of this study

CHAPTER 2 : THE CONCEPT OF STRESS AND NON COPING

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Typically, stress refers to both adjustive demands placed on an organism and to the organism's biological and psychological responses. The business person might see stress as frustration and/or emotional tension. For the traffic controller it can manifest as concentration problems and for the athlete muscular tension. The majority consider their own occupation as the most stressful.

According to Selye (1993, p.7) stress can be defined as the "nonspecific (that is, common) result of any demand upon the body, be the effect mental or somatic". Another definition of stress is "an adaptive response, mediated by individual characteristics and/or psychological processes, that is a consequence of any external action, situation, or event that places special physical and/or psychological demands upon a person" (Kreitner & Kinicki, 1989, p.564). According to Kreitner and Kinicki (1989) the interrelated dimensions of stress derived from the definition are *environmental demands* (stressors) which produce *an adaptive response* that is influenced by *individual differences*.

Antonovsky's definition of stress is "... a state of the organism in which energy in utilized in continuously dealing with problems over and above the energy that would have been demanded had the problem been resolved." (Christensen, 1981, p.64).

According to Carson, Butcher and Mineka (1996) it is important to differentiate between the following:

- stressors
- stress
- coping strategies

Stressors refer to adjustment demands, with *stress* the effects created by the stressors within the organism. *Coping strategies* refer to efforts of the organism to deal with the stress.

This chapter will aim to provide a theoretical framework of the concept of stress and non coping, and non coping or maladaptive coping.

2.2 FACTORS PREDISPOSING AN INDIVIDUAL TO STRESS

According to Kreitner and Kinicki (1989) stress is inevitable, and the total absence thereof is death. The degree to which stress impairs the functioning of the individual depends largely on severity. According to Carson et al (1996) the actual degree of disruption that occurs or is threatened, depends partly on the following:

- the characteristics of the stressor
- the resources of the individual (both personal and situational)
- the relationship between the above two factors

2.2.1 The nature of the stressor

Stressors can be defined as forces capable of causing stress and can be of physical (for example noisy environment), psychological such as frustration, pressure or cultural nature (Cohen, 1994). According to Cohen (1994) *psychological stressors* can be categorised in terms of:

- change
- conflict
- frustration
- pressure

Change not only causes stress, but may also result in the relief thereof. Over the course of a lifetime, people weather various changes, whether physical, mental, emotional, social or environmental. Some are clearly more stressful than others. According to statistical probabilities, some groups of events to which adjustment is required are more likely than others to play a part in the onset of illness (Cohen, 1994).

Conflict in this context more often refers to "... opposing or incompatible thoughts, feelings, or behaviours that are competing for expression" (Cohen, 1994, p.158).

According to Cohen (1994) categories of such conflict include the following:

- approach-approach conflict
- approach-avoidance conflict
- avoidance-avoidance conflict

Approach-approach conflict refers to choices between equally attractive objectives, *approach-avoidance conflict* to choices related to strong negative and positive feelings about an objective, with *avoidance-avoidance conflict* referring to choices between equally unattractive objectives (Bergh & Theron, 1999, p.451).

Another category of psychological stressors is frustration. *Frustration* can be defined as "... a source of stress resulting from the prevention, blocking, or thwarting of efforts or wishes to achieve a desired objective" (Cohen, 1994, p.159).

According to Cohen (1994) the best way of dealing with frustration is by prevention. That can be done by acquiring the competencies needed to succeed. Another way entails monitoring and effectively altering demands on the self by asking one or more of the following questions:

- how realistic are these demands ?
- too high ?

- too low ?

- what constitutes a minimum level of performance that could reasonably be expected ?

From a psychological point of view, **pressure** can be defined as worrisome cognition that "weigh" on the mind. It is burdensome internal or external demands regarding thoughts, feelings and/or behaviour (Cohen, 1994). Apart from other sources such as family, and friends, the self is also an important source of pressure. Some are more driven than others in the quest for high levels of success in a relatively short time span.

Pressure from the self can also be beneficial. As a result of early century experiments, the Yerkes-Dodson principle was formulated. In simplified form, the principle is according to Cohen (1994, p.161) as follows:

> There is an optimal degree of pressure for every task. In general, the more difficult or complex the task, the more a high degree of pressure will interfere or disrupt the successful completion of the task. Therefore, the higher the degree of task difficulty or complexity, the lower will be the optimal degree of pressure

According to Carson et al (1996) the impact of a stressor depends on factors such as :

- its importance to the individual
- the duration of the stress
- the cumulative effect of stressors in the life of the individual
- whether the stressor appears in isolation or along with other stressors
- the prominence of the stressor in the individual's life
- whether the particular stressor is seen by the individual as within or outside his or her own control

According to Cohen (1994) examples of *physical stressors* include the following:

- disease
- physical trauma
- physical disorders
- malnutrition
- dehydration
- lack of sleep
- physical pain
- foul air in a stuffy room
- foul air in a polluted environment
- physical discomfort from crowding
- threats to life and limb posed by fire, water, drugs and guns

2.2.2 The resources of the individual

Since this research is directed by the paradigm of salutogenesis, the following constructs can be regarded as important:

- sense of coherence
- personality hardiness
- potency
- stamina
- learned resourcefulness

For the purposes of this research the emphasis will fall on **Sense of Coherence (SOC).**

In order to cope with the demands of stress individuals make use of generalized resistance resources (Strümpfer, 1990). This concept facilitates effective tension management in any situation.

According to Strümpfer (1990) resources include the following:

- physical and biochemical resources
- artifactual material resources (including money, food and clothes - thus wealth)
- cognitive resources (for example knowledge and skills)
- emotional resources of ego identity
- coping strategies (plans of action to overcome stressors)
- interpersonal-relational resources (including social support and commitment)
- macrosociocultural resources (including answers to problems provided by one's own culture and social structure)

2.3 SENSE OF COHERENCE (SOC) AS COPING RESOURCE

Antonovsky (1987) is of the persuasion that Sense of Coherence (SOC) is a major determinant in the maintenance of one's position on the health ease/disease continuum and of movement toward the healthy end. According to Antonovsky (1987) the following three components of SOC can be identified:

- comprehensibility
- manageability
- meaningfulness

Comprehensibility refers to the extent to which the individual perceives both internal and external stimuli. **Manageability** refers to the extent to which events are perceived as experiences which are bearable, can be coped with or, as challenges that can be met, with **meaningfulness** the extent to which the individual feels that life makes sense emotionally rather than cognitively.

According to Antonovky (1987, p.19):

> The sense of coherence is a global orientation that expresses the extent to which one has a pervasive, enduring though dynamic feeling of confidence that (1) the stimuli deriving from one's internal and external environments in the course of living are structured, predictable, and explicable; (2) the resources are available to one to meet the demands posed by these stimuli; and (3) these demands are challenges, worthy of investment and engagement.

2.3.1 Comprehensibility

Comprehensibility can be viewed as the well defined, explicit core of the definition of SOC as it refers to "... the extent to which one perceives the stimuli that confront one, deriving from the internal and external environments, as making cognitive sense, as information that is ordered, consistent, structured, and clear, rather that as noise - chaotic, disordered, random, accidental, inexplicable" (Antonovsky, 1987, p.16 - 17).

Individuals high on the sense of comprehensibility expect that stimuli they will encounter in future will be predictable or, when they come as surprises, that they will be orderable and explicable (Antonovky, 1987). Even should death, war or failure occur, this individual can make sense of it. According to Antonovsky (1987) extremes on the continuum can be illustrated as follows:

SAD SACK   Events in life are seen
(Something goes wrong   as experiences that can
in one's life - everything   be coped with/challenges
thereafter will go wrong -   that can be met - extreme
extreme even paranoia)   event or consequences
            are bearable

←————————————————————————————————→

WEAK SOC   STRONG SOC
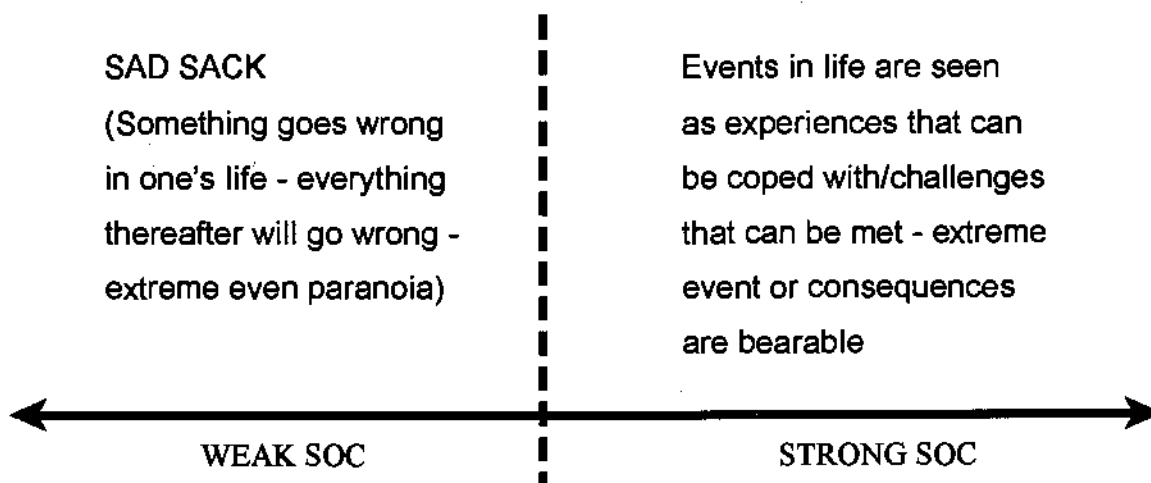
2.3.2 Manageability

Manageability can be defined as "... the extent to which one perceives that resources are at one's disposal which are adequate to meet the demands posed by the stimuli that bombard one" (Antonovsky, 1987, p.17). According to Antonovsky (1987) "at one's disposal" refers to resources under one's own control or to resources controlled by legitimate others (such as spouse, friends, colleagues, God, history, the party leader, a physician) whom one feels one can rely on or trust.

2.3.3 Meaningfulness

Meaningfulness refers to "... the extent to which one feels that life makes sense emotionally, that at least some of the problems and demands posed by living are worth investing energy in, are worthy of commitment and engagement, are challenges that are "welcome" rather than burdens that one would much rather do without" (Antonovsky, 1987, p.18).

This does not mean that an individual with a high sense of meaningfulness is happy about the death of a loved one, the need to undergo a serious operation, or being fired from one's job. The difference is that, when these unhappy experiences are imposed on such persons, they will be willing to take up the challenge and will be determined to seek some meaning in it, and will do their best to overcome it with dignity (Antonovsky, 1987).

2.3.4 Relations among the three components

The following discussion will focus on the relationship between comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness as indicated by Antonovky (1987).

In discussing the links between Generalised Resistance Resources (GGR's) and the SOC during earlier works, Antonovsky defined the GGR's as phenomena that provide one with sets of life experiences which, according to Antonovsky (1987) are characterised by the following:

* consistency
* participation in shaping the outcome; and
* an underload-overload balance

According to Antonovsky (1987) such repeated life experiences build up the SOC. The implicit assumption was that a GGR necessarily provided all three aforementioned types of experiences. Indeed, also conceivable situations will occur in which a person's experiences will lead him or her to be high on one component and low on another. This might not necessarily be a temporally, specific situation, but in a general life situation.

For example, an individual finds him- of herself in a social role that, although providing life experiences of consistency and a reasonably underload-overload balance, does not provide the experience of participation in shaping outcomes because of the fact that their potentials are ignored.

The following is a discussion of dynamic interrelatedness of the SOC components as discussed in Antonovsky (1987). This interrelatedness is summarised in table 1.

According to Antonovsky (1987) it can be assumed that *types 1 and 8* views the world as either coherent or incoherent, which is stable.

Types 2 and 7 are rarely found. High manageability is strongly contingent on high comprehensibility. A requirement for sensing that resources are available to meet demands is that one have a clear picture of what those demands are. Living in a world perceived as chaotic and unpredictable, makes for difficulty in believing that one can manage well. It is important to note that being high on comprehensibility does not

necessarily mean that one believes one can manage well (Antonovsky, 1987).

Types 3 and 6 are inherently unstable. According to Antonovsky (1987) high comprehensibility together with low manageability leads to a strong pressure to change, with the direction of the movement to be determined by the sense of meaningfulness.

When an individual cares and believes that he or she understands the problems confronting him or her, they will be strongly motivated to seek out resources, being loath to give up the search until that is found. Lacking such motivation, one ceases to respond to stimuli, and the world soon becomes incomprehensible - nor is the individual impelled to search for resources (Antonovsky, 1987).

According to Antonovsky (1987) these two types can be noted as follows:

HIGH C + LOW MA + HIGH ME → HIGH C + HIGH MA + HIGH ME
HIGH C + LOW MA + LOW ME → LOW C + LOW MA + LOW ME

Regarding *types 4 and 5*, even if an individual is high on both comprehensibility and manageability, knowing the rules of the game and believing that the resources are at one's disposal to play successfully, without caring (type 5) one soon comes to fall behind in one's understanding and looses one's command of resources (Antonovsky, 1987).

By contrast, an individual low on comprehensibility and manageability but high on meaningfulness (type 4) is the most interesting case of all. He or she is likely to show a profound spirit, deeply engaged in the search for understanding and resources (Antonovsky, 1987). According to Antonovsky (1987), although there is a chance of success - there is no guarantee.

These two types can be noted as follows (Antonovsky, 1987):

HIGH C + HIGH MA + LOW ME → LOW C + LOW MA + LOW ME

LOW C + LOW MA + HIGH ME → ?

Table 1   :   The dynamic interraletedness of the SOC components
(Antonovsky, 1987: 20)

COMPONENT

TYPE	Comprehensibility	Manageability	Meaningfulness	PREDICTION
1	High	High	High	Stable
2	Low	High	High	Rare
3	High	Low	High	Pressure to move up
4	Low	Low	High	Pressure to move up
5	High	High	Low	Pressure to move down
6	High	Low	Low	Pressure to move down
7	Low	High	Low	Rare
8	Low	Low	Low	Stable

Seemingly the three components of the SOC are, although all of necessity, of unequal centrality (Antonovsky, 1987). According to Antonovsky (1987) the most crucial seems to be the motivational component of meaningfulness. Lacking this component, being high on comprehensibility and manageability is likely to be temporary. Individuals who are committed and caring should be able to gain understanding and resources.

The next component of importance is comprehensibility (Antonovsky, 1987). According to Antonovsky (1987) the reason being that high manageability is contingent on understanding. Should the individual not believe that resources are at his or her

disposal, meaningfulness will be lessened and coping efforts weakened. As a result, successful coping depends on the SOC as a whole (Antonovsky, 1987).

Antonovsky emphasizes the integration and union of the self and the world, a notion akin to the hardy personality style of Kobasa (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Sense of coherence can be simplified as being at one with the world, with emotionally supportive functions, and is probably a positive factor in social and work functioning and health (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

2.4   THE CONCEPT OF COPING

At this point it is necessary to define certain aspects surrounding coping, especially strain, stress resistance and coping itself. According to Hobfoll (1988) stressors are events that occur within the environment or body causing an emotional or task demand on the individual, which strains the responses manifested by the individual (including psychological strain such as depressions and anxiety). For the purpose of limiting such strain, the individual resists the stress caused by the stressors (Hobfoll, 1988). According to Hobfoll (1988) this should not be confused with coping.

Coping can be defined as "... behaviors that are employed for the purpose of reducing strain in the face of stressors" (Hobfoll, 1988, p.16), or as "the process of managing taxing circumstances, expending effort to solve personal and interpersonal problems, and seeking to master, minimize, reduce, or tolerate stress and conflict" (Simons, Kalichman & Santrock, 1994, p.114). It can also be defined as " constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p.141).

Coping can be viewed as process-orientation rather than trait-orientation (reflected in *constantly changing* and *specific* demands and conflicts) (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984) distinction is made between coping and

automised adaptive behaviour, since the definition of coping is limited to demands that

are appraised as *taxing* and *exceeding* an individual's resources. Thus, the definition limits coping to *conditions of psychological stress* (which requires mobilisation and excludes automised behaviours and thoughts that do require effort (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Furthermore, coping is defined as *efforts to manage*, which permits coping to include anything that the person does or thinks, regardless of how well it really works (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984) it is important to note that managing coping is *not equated with mastery*. Managing include minimizing, avoiding, tolerating, and accepting stressful conditions as well as attempts to master the environment (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984) coping can be viewed as a process, characterised by the following three features:

- Observations and assessment concerned with what the individual *actually* does/thinks, in contrast to what the individual usually does, could do and should do
- What the individual actually does/thinks is examined within a *specific context*. Since coping thoughts and actions are always directed toward particular conditions, it is important to know what the individual is coping with
- To refer to a coping process means referring to *change* in coping thoughts and actions as a stressful encounter unfolds.

During the coping process, situational and personal factors have an influence on the cognitive appraisal of the stressor, which in turn leads to various coping strategies being applied (Kreitner & Kinicki, 1989). A proposed model of the coping process is presented in figure 2. Coping is a shifting process. At certain times the individual needs to rely more heavily on one form of coping, for example defensive strategies, at other times on problem solving strategies. Shifting is the result of the status of changing person-environment relationship (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).
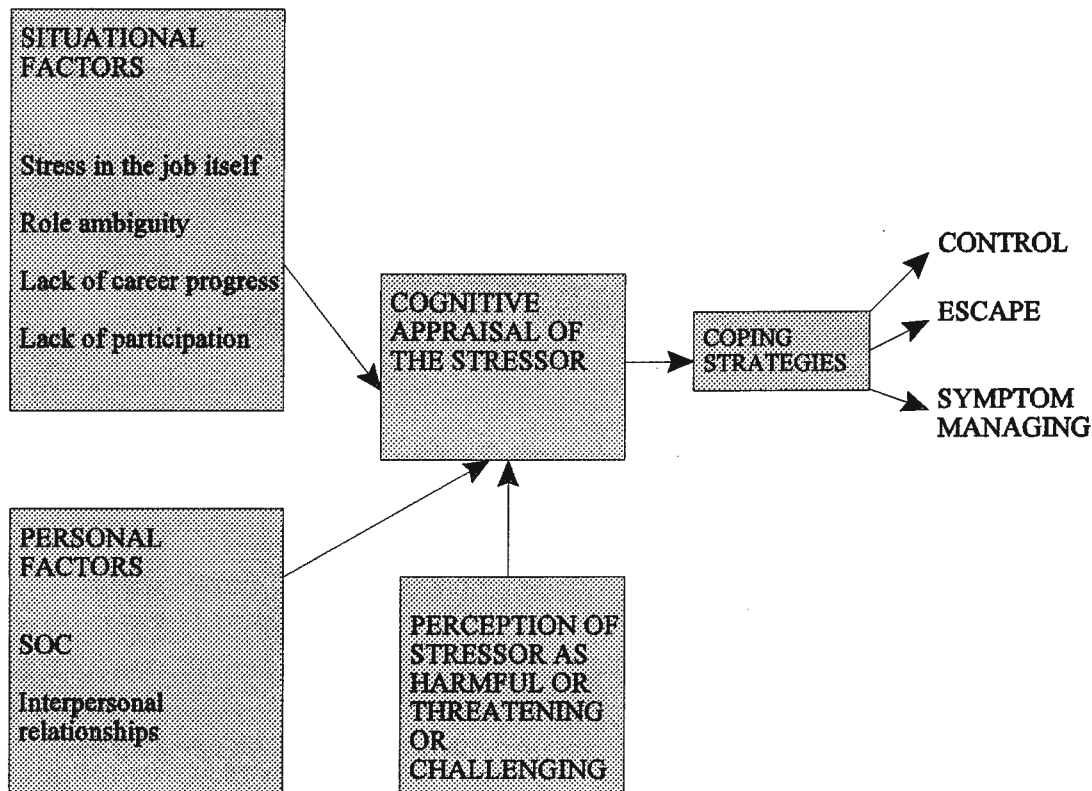
Figure 2: **A Model of the Coping Process** (Adapted from Kreitner & Kinicki, 1989, p.582)

The dynamics and changes that characterise the coping process are not random. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984) they are functions of continuous appraisals and reappraisals of the shifting person-environment relationship. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984) shifting may be the result of one of the following:

- coping efforts directed at changing the environment; or

- inward coping directed that changes the meaning of the event or increases understanding; or

- changes in the environment that are independent of the person and his/her coping activity

Regardless of the source, any shift in the person-environment relationship will lead to a re-evaluation of what is happening, the significance thereof, and what can be done, which in turn, influences the coping efforts (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984) the entire process may last several months or even years characterised by multiple coping methods and emotional difficulties.

2.4.1 Stages in the coping process

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984) several researchers have proposed stages of the coping process. These stages, as presented in Lazarus and Folkman (1984) will now be discussed. One such process, dealing with how children cope with stress, can be illustrated as follows:

PROTEST ➡ DESPAIR ➡ DETACHMENT

Children can make use of avoidance behaviour, whereby the child protects itself from the disorganised consequences of the conflict between anger toward the mother and the need for reasserting attachment (in the case of reunion with mother after long separation). Avoidance is selected as a defence mechanism that permits the child to maintain control over anger that has grown severe and disruptive. Coping behaviour towards a threatened loss can be illustrated as follows:

Increased effort and level of concentration	➡	Frustration and anger	➡	Depression characterised by pessimism and apathy
		⬆ Continued thwarting	⬆ Failure to achieve goal or to make progress	
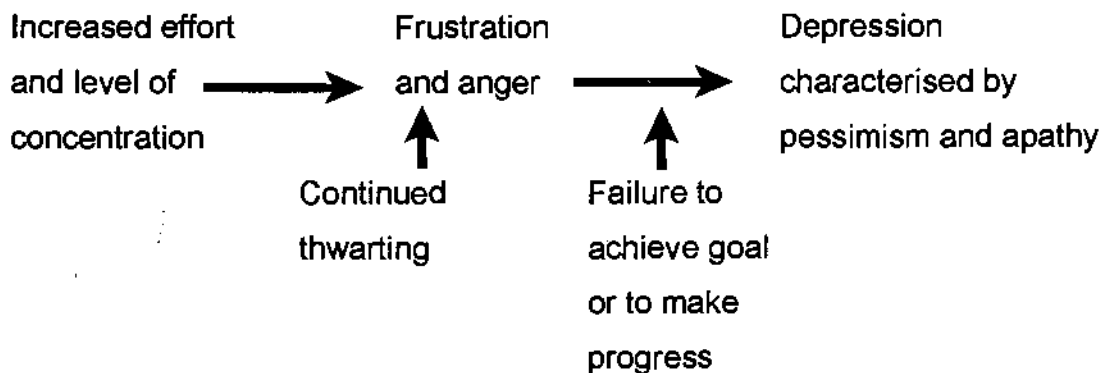
This can be seen as the sequence of normal stages of coping. Disengagement and depression are initially an adaptive way of coping. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), ultimately there is a psychological recovery from the loss, and intrusive thoughts about it also dissipate, consistent with the view that a person cycles back and forth between two stages as syndromes of stress response.

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984) individuals dealing with serious illness or disability will proceed through the following proposed stages:

Continual shifting back and forth

SHOCK	ENCOUNTER	RETREAT
Feeling of detachment Sometimes remarkable clarity and efficiency of thought and action	An extremely intense period in which the person is apt to experience helplessness, panic and disorganisation	Correspond to denial, numbing phase - this is gradually abandoned in favour of increasing "reality testing"

The retreat phase is seen as an important, natural means of preventing breakdown by allowing temporary withdrawal into a safety zone (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), the above stages can be viewed as necessary precursors to psychological growth, in which there is a renewed sense of personal worth, a greater sense of satisfaction, and a lessening of anxiety. Another stage model is based on the concept of reactance. Reactance can be defined as an effort to explain why individuals do not necessarily give up when they discover that they are helpless, as the learned helplessness model originally argued (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Resistance means that behaviour is restricted - people respond with anger and an increase in motivation to overcome the resistance to their freedom of action.

The model can be illustrated as follows:

Continued unsuccessful efforts

Initial reaction
to uncontrollable
outcomes

Lowered motivation,
increased passivity and
depression
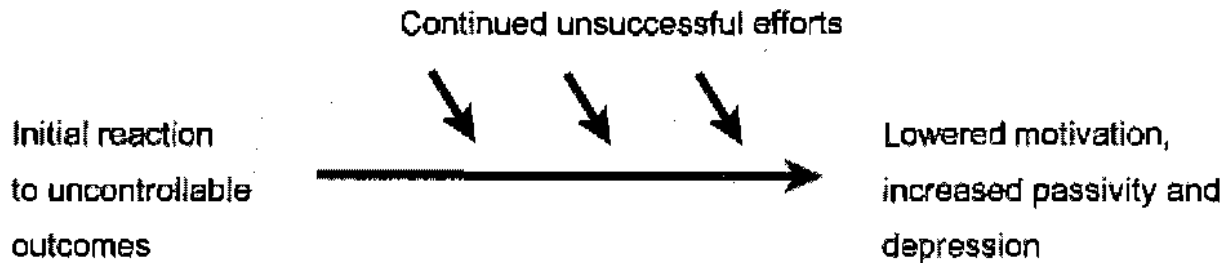
The sequence can be described as invigoration ⟶ depression.

According to disaster literature, coping stages can be illustrated as follows (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984):

Anticipatory ⟶ Impact ⟶ Postimpact
(or warning)   (or confrontation)   (or post-
                                     confrontation)
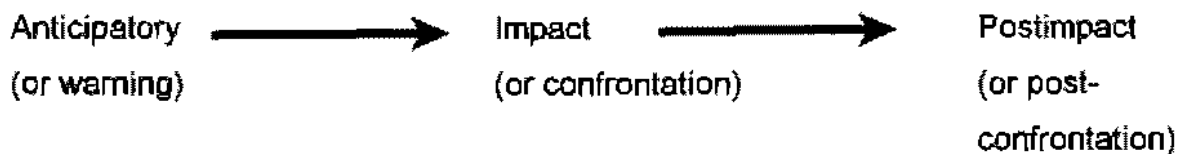
During the phase of *anticipation* the event has not yet occurred and paramount issues to be appraised by the individual include:

- whether or not it will happen
- when will it happen ?
- what will happen ?

The cognitive appraisal process also evaluates whether, to what extent, and how the individual can manage the threat (a secondary appraisal process to sense of control) (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Questions asked include:

- can it be prevented ?

- in what ways ?
- what can be done to minimize or prevent the damage ?
- can some damage be prevented while other damage must be endured ?
- if it can not be prevented, can it be endured and, if so, how ?
- can it be postponed ?
- what are the costs of anticipatory coping ?

During *impact* many thoughts and actions relevant to the sense of control are now irrelevant, the reason being that the harmful event occurs (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The individual realizes what is as bad or worse than anticipated, and in what ways. Unexpected differences in control over the unfolding event may require the individual to reassess its significance. These cognitions are referred to as *reappraisals* or situational redefinition.

During the *postimpact* phase new considerations and tasks emerge. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984) it includes the following:

- how can one mop up, psychologically and materially, after the damage ?
- what is the personal meaning or significance of what has happened ?
- what new demands, threats, and challenges does it impose ?
- can one return to the status quo ante, or have things changed appreciably?

2.4.2 Coping strategies

According to Simons et al (1994), distinction can be made, applying the theory of Lazarus, between the following two general types of coping efforts:

- problem-focussed coping
- emotion-focussed coping

Problem-focussed coping is the term for "the cognitive strategy of squarely facing one's troubles and trying to solve them" (Simons et al, 1994: 114). Thus, the individual faces his or her problem and attempts to deal with it. ***Emotional-focussed coping*** refers to "responding to stress in an emotional manner, especially using defensive appraisal" (Simons et al, 1994, p.114). According to Simons et al (1994) it involves various defence mechanisms. The typical pattern is avoiding something, then rationalising the event, denying it, laughing it off, or calling on religious faith for support (Simons et al, 1994). Emotion-focussed coping can be adaptive in certain instances (Simons et al, 1994). For example, denial is a major protective psychological mechanism and can be used to avoid the disruptive impact of shock when dealing with a stressor. However, continual denial and other emotion-focussed coping mechanisms are usually maladaptive (Simons et al, 1994).

According to Simons et al (1994) problem-focussed coping leads to better adjustment than emotion-focussed coping over the long term. When adjusting to stressful circumstances, most individuals use both problem- and emotion-focussed coping (Simons et al, 1994). According to Simons et al (1994) a further distinction can be made between the following:

- active-cognitive coping strategies
- active-behavioural strategies; and
- avoidance strategies

Active-cognitive coping strategies refers to "coping responses in which individuals actively think about a situation in an effort to adjust more effectively" (Simons et al, 1994, p.115). ***Active-behavioural strategies*** refers to "coping responses in which individuals take some type of action to improve their problem situation" (Simons et al, 1994, p.115). When the individual needs to cope with multiple stressors, an extremely valuable active-behavioural strategy is to try and remove at least one of the stressors from his or her life. ***Avoidance strategies*** refers to "responses that individuals use to keep stressful circumstances out of awareness so they do not have to deal with them"

(Simons et al, 1994, p.115). As result, the individual never considers better ways to cope and never take any improved actions.

According to Simons et al (1994) multiple coping strategies are usually more effective than single strategies. Thus, it is far more effective to adopt several coping techniques rather than selecting the most familiar one. When faced with stressful life events, adopting several parts of the multiple coping plan may be more effective. According to Simons et al (1994) these parts may include:

- engaging in problem-focussed coping
- engaging in active-cognitive strategies
- engaging in active-behavioural strategies
- applying self control
- seeking social support
- exercising regularly
- eating sensibly and reducing alcohol assumption
- practising relaxation techniques

2.4.3 Defence mechanisms in coping

Defence mechanisms form a major category of coping styles (Brodsky, 1988). Referring to individuals' engagement in processes to protect themselves from possible hurt, failure, or rejection (Brodsky, 1988). According to Brodsky (1988) distinction can be made between the following types of defence mechanisms:

- Suppression
- Repression and denial
- Compensation
- Projection
- Displacement
- Intellectualisation and rationalisation

- Other defence mechanisms (including fantasy, regression, identification and reaction formation)

Suppression "is the conscious, deliberate refusal to face threatening possibilities" (Brodsky, 1988, p.129). This is the only defence mechanism consciously controlled. For example, people who discover that they have a disease may purposefully keep the disease out of their thoughts and discussions. *Repression* refers to " the exclusion from consciousness of anxiety-arousing thoughts, feelings, or memories, particularly those involving anger or sexuality" (Brodsky, 1988, p.130). Repression is unconscious - the repressor is not clearly aware of the anxiety nor of the ways in which it is repressed.

Compensation refers to "a defence mechanism which the individual attempts to make up for a deficiency in a certain area by developing a strength in another area" (Silverman, 1982, p.519). According to Silverman (1982), compensation relates to frustrations experienced by individuals by failure or by loss of self-esteem resulting from inadequate performance in a particular activity, and the resulting tendency to defend themselves against such feelings, resulting in reachable goal selection. When a perceived weakness is covered up by emphasizing a desirable characteristic or when making up for frustration in one area by over gratification in another, it is referred to as *overcompensation* (Carson et al 1996).

According to Brodsky (1988) research suggests that strong repression is an extreme point on a continuum which can be illustrated as follows:

Repressor
(screens all upsetting
thoughts from awareness)

Most people fall
somewhere here on
the continuum

Sensitizer
(very alert for all
possible unpleasant
memories and feelings
and gets upset by them)

Although *denial* involves the exclusion of threats or fears from awareness (as in the case of repression), it describes the exclusion of external events from consciousness for example, the failure to recognise the threatening nature of acid rain and toxic waste dumps (Brodsky, 1988).

Projection is, like repression, a defence mechanism that blocks anxiety-arousing feelings out of awareness. According to Brodsky (1988) the difference lies in the following:

- Repression: individual holds it in
- Projection: individual attributes the unacceptable thoughts to other individuals. Individuals blame those around them for their problems. What basically happens is that the individual unconsciously tries to feel better by making other people appear worse.

Sometimes it can happen that anxieties and drives are channelled toward nonthreatening objects, which is called *displacement* (Brodsky, 1988). For example, individuals are frustrated and can not express their feelings, becoming aggressive toward some available target, for example, kicking the furniture, hitting a pet or yelling out at another individual in the immediate family.

According to Brodsky (1988) all displacements are not maladaptive. Many creative efforts such as arts, music, writing and scientific experiments may be used to handle unacceptable thoughts and feelings. Such adaptive and constructive channelling is called sublimation referring to the well-being analogue of displacement (Brodsky, 1988).

The essence of *intellectualisation* is emotional detachment (Brodsky, 1988). Instead of being personally involved in discomforting events, these individuals do not allow themselves to care. They are analytical, cool, distant and uninvolved (Brodsky, 1988).

Rationalisation is closely related to intellectualisation. It is an attempt to explain away anxiety-arousing fears (Brodsky, 1988). For example, if the individual does not get a particular job, he or she may tell a friend that the "prospects of the job were unsatisfactory" in order to hide feelings of failure.

Other forms of defence mechanisms include fantasy, regression, identification and reaction formation. *Fantasy* is "the excessive indulgence in daydreaming or in unrealistic fantasies" (Brodsky, 1988, p.132). *Regression* refers to "behaving in ways that belong to earlier stages in one's development" (Brodsky, 1988, p.132). Examples of the latter include temper tantrums or dependency.

It may also happen that an individual gives up his or her emotional stance to identify with whoever is the stressor, which is a defence mechanism called identification. *Identification* refers to " the active acceptance of the point of view and position of those persons who are causing the anxiety" (Brodsky, 1988, p.132). *Reaction formation* on the other hand is " the adoption of a feeling opposite to that actually felt" (Brodsky, 1988, p.132). An example of reaction formation is chronically angry people who act excessively nice, or a person who "doth protest too much".

2.5 NON COPING DEFINED

According to Cohen (1994) distinction can be made between adaptive and maladaptive coping. *Adaptive coping* can be defined as "contending with stress in a manner such that the source of the stress is maturely and effectively addressed as a result, and the stress is thereby lessened, eliminated, or made more tolerable" (Cohen, 1994, p.174). Thus, an appropriate definition of *non coping* be that of Cohen (1994, p.174) referring to *maladaptive coping*:

> contending with stress in a manner such that the source of the stress is ineffectively or inadequately addressed, and the stress either remains or is compounded as a result

According to Cohen (1994) non coping is a rather extreme alternative. Most people attempt to cope - some adaptively, some maladaptively and others somewhere between these two ends of the coping spectrum.

The emphasis of this research will be non coping or maladaptive coping.

2.5.1 Perception of threat

Individuals may react differently to stress, depending on their perception of threat and their stress tolerance (Carson et al, 1996).

Whether the threat is real or not, when a situation is perceived as threatening, it is experienced as highly stressful. Should an individual feel overwhelmed or that he or she might not be able to deal with the particular threat, they are more likely to experience negative consequences than in the case of individuals feeling that they can cope with the situation. According to Carson et al (1996, p.123), the importance of having a sense of control can be noted as follows:

> Control appears to moderate the effects of stress by allowing the person to alter the stress response directly or to select a response that will alter or avert the threatened event

A model of stressor perception was provided by Cohen (1994), and is presented in figure 3. The model can be defined as "a representation of some person, place, object, or process, devised to facilitate general understanding and specific information about operation, utility, and structure" (Cohen, 1994, p.168).

In the model, potential stressors emphasize the relative nature of forces that cause stress. According to Cohen (1994) causes of stress may depend on a number of factors unique to a particular situation (referred to a *situational factors* as well as factors unique to the individual (*physiological* and *psychological filters*). As result, many

aspects such as noise level, should be considered in its situational context before an informed appraisal can be made regarding the amount of stress caused by noise.

Situational factors

POTENTIAL STRESSORS

PHYSIOLOGICAL "FILTERS"

PSYCHOLOGICAL "FILTERS"

Cognitive labeling of arousal

Coping response or not

ADAPTIVE   MALADAPTIVE
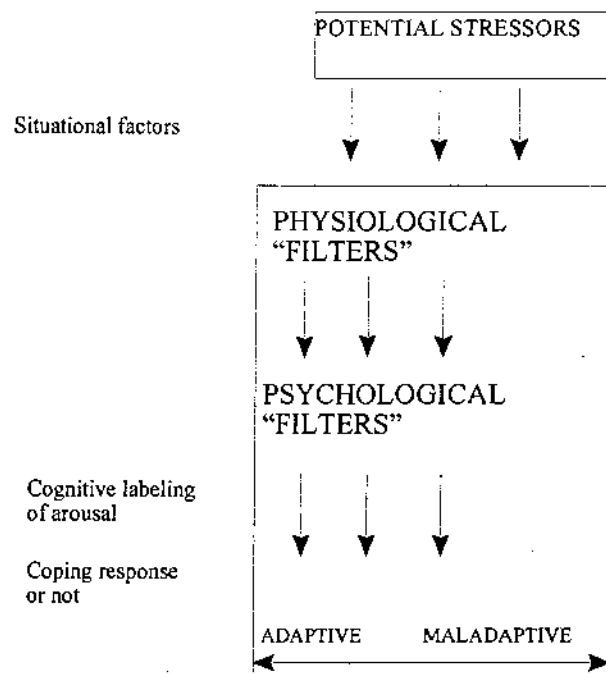
Figure 3:   A model of stressor perception (Cohen, 1994, p.168)

As can be seen from the model, the manner in which an individual perceives or experiences a sensory stimulus depends on the action and interaction of a number of factors such as:

- the nature of the potential stressor itself
- situational factors
- the individual's psychological and psychological filtering system
- the degree and nature of the arousal anticipated
- the cognitive labelling of the arousal state experienced

Sensory stimuli are screened through a system consisting of physiological and psychological filters. Incoming sensory information is being processed with respect to experience, to past and existing beliefs, opinions, and feelings, and to other information (Cohen, 1994). According to Cohen (1994) this process can be adaptive or maladaptive. In this context, *adaptive* refers to " a rational process that yields constructive thoughts or behaviors" (Cohen, 1994, p.169). *Maladaptive* refers to "a typically irrational process that does not yield constructive thoughts or behavior and may result to being hurtful to oneself or others" (Cohen, 1994, p.169).

The state of arousal experienced in response to the stimuli is given a cognitive label by the individual aroused (Cohen, 1994). According to Cohen (1994) two types of mental labels can be identified, namely *stressful* and *not stressful*. The chosen label may be the result of an adaptive or maladaptive labelling process (Cohen, 1994). According to Cohen (1994) the labelling of a stressor as stressful or not stressful will have consequences on the coping decision. As in the process of perception, the process of deciding how to cope with stress may be adaptive or maladaptive.

2.5.2 Stress tolerance

Should a person be only marginally adjusted, the slightest frustration or pressure may be highly stressful. An individual generally unsure of his or her adequacy and worth, is much more likely to feel threatened than someone who generally feels confident and secure.

According to Carson et al (1996: 123) stress tolerance refers to " a person's ability to withstand stress without becoming seriously impaired"

INTEGRATION

The aim of chapter 2 was to provide a theoretical framework of the concept of stress and non coping. The focus was on factors predisposing an individual to stress, stages in the coping process and coping strategies and defence mechanisms in coping. Since this research will be based on Sense of Coherence (SOC) as resource in accordance with the paradigm of salutogenesis, SOC as presented by Antonovsky, was clarified.

The aim of this research is to investigate the experience of non coping in the workplace. As result, the aim was to provide an appropriate definition for non coping. Since the experience will be investigated within the workplace, attention need to focus on stress and the experience thereof, the aim which the next chapter will seek to satisfy.

CHAPTER 3:   STRESS IN THE WORKPLACE

3.1   INTRODUCTION

As discussed under the previous chapter, stressors refer to adjustment demands, with stress the created affect. According to Patel (1992) an individual spends a major part of his or her waking life at work and, increasing stress, from whatever source, may show itself as inability to cope with their work. As a result, it is important to recognise potential sources of stress at work, under what circumstances health and optimum functioning is affected, so as to cope better.

This chapter will aim to provide a theoretical framework of stress and coping, and as result, non coping within the work environment.

3.2   SOURCES OF MANAGERIAL STRESS

According to Sutherland and Cooper (1990), as presented in figure 4 , research has indicated the following categories of sources of stress in the workplace:

- Stress in the job itself such as stressors intrinsic to the job such as workload, poor physical conditions, and low decision making latitude
- Role-based stress (associated with role conflict, role ambiguity and responsibility)
- Interpersonal relationships with superiors, colleagues and subordinates, as well as interpersonal demands
- Career development for example under or over promotion and lack of job security
- Organisational structure and climate (including restrictions on behaviour and the politics and culture of the organisation)

This corresponds with main causes of stress as presented by Armstrong (1995), namely:

- The work itself
  - over-pressurised
  - actual or perceived failure

- Role within the organisation
  - ambiguity regarding what is expected of the individual; or
  - conflict between what he or she wants to do and can do (role ambiguity)

- Poor relationships within the organisation
  - lack of information
  - little effective consultation
  - restrictions on behaviour
  - office politics

- Feelings about job or career
  - lack of job security
  - over-promotion
  - under-promotion

- External pressures
  - clash between organisational and family demands
  - other external interests
  - home interface problems of excessive hours
  - many travelling and company moves
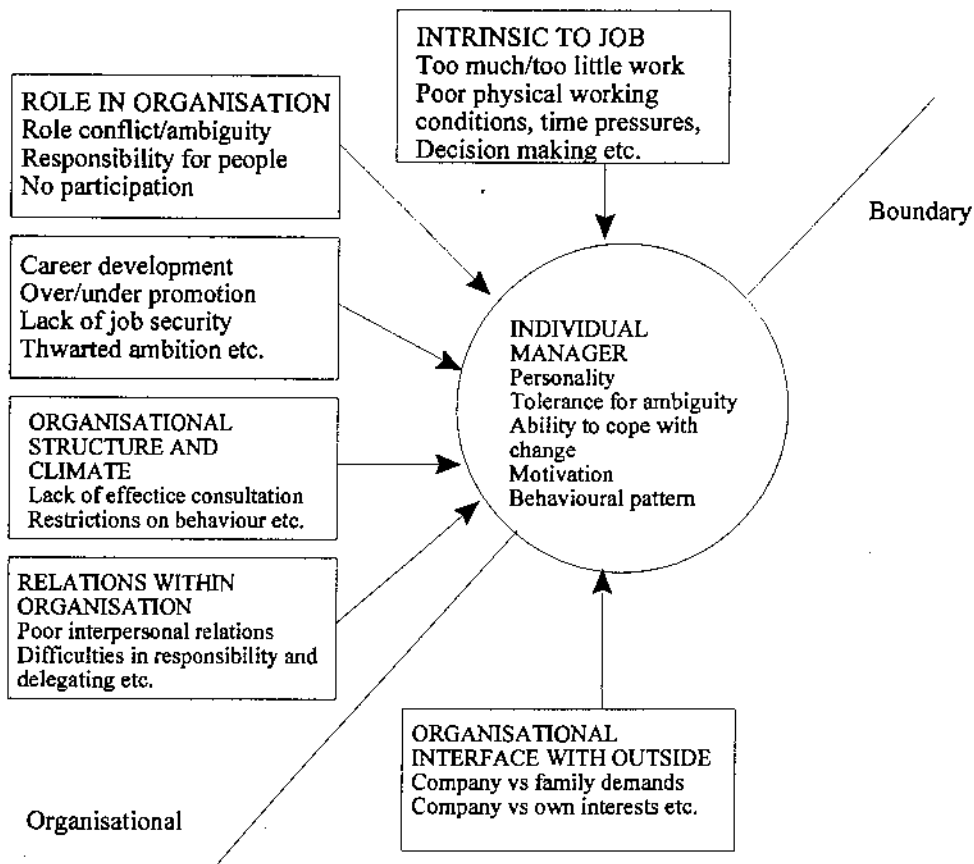
Figure 4: **Sources of managerial stress** (Sutherland & Cooper, 1990, p.26)

3.2.1 Factors influencing managerial stress

Apart from factors mentioned to date, other factors affecting occupational stress exist. According to Schuler and Huber (1993) these factors can be divided into the following categories:

- Employee stressors
- Organisational change
- Work pace

- Burnout

With regard to *employee stressors*, the following can be regarded as stressors:

- supervision
- salary
- job security
- safety

According to Schuler and Huber (1993) the following two stressors are associated with supervision:

- petty work rules; and
- relentless pressure for more production

Both stressors deny employees fulfilment of their needs in terms of control over the work situation, to be recognised and to be accepted in the unit or organisation (Schuler & Huber, 1993).

Should salary be perceived as unfair, it becomes a stressor (Schuler & Huber, 1993). According to Schuler and Huber (1993) job insecurity can also be viewed as a prominent stressor. In many instances, job insecurity can even be more stressful than jobs that are unsafe. As result of insecurity, employees are constantly in a state of uncertainty.

According to Schuler and Huber (1993) organisational changes such as the following are common in today's world:

- changes in
    - organisational structure
    - job assignments
    - technology

- reporting relationships
* downsizings and mergers
* takeovers

All these changes, even for the good of the organisation, are stressful, the reason being that change is often accompanied by uncertainty and can occur without advance warning. Even rumours preceding change can cause stress among employees. Who or what controls the *pace of work*, is a particular potential stressor in the workplace (Schuler & Huber, 1993). Machine pacing for example, removes control over the speed of the operation and work output of the individual. Workers on machine-paced jobs reportedly feel exhausted at the end of a shift and are unable to relax soon after work due to increased adrenaline secretion on the job (Schuler & Huber, 1993).

Another stressor is *unplanned interruptions* (Schuler & Huber, 1993). Certain tasks might need to be attended to at a moment's notice. For example, should computer system repairs need attention, and those attending to the repairs are aware that the institution is causing frustration to clientele , it adds to the individual's stress situation. This type of work is far more stressful than work that involves planned cycles of peak activity (Schuler & Huber, 1993). Another factor to consider is *job burnout*, a condition which refers to the fact that a "... stress condition happens when people work in situations in which they have little control over the quality of their performance but feel personally responsible for their success or lack of it" (Schuler & Huber, 1993, p.669). Burnout can also be defined as "a condition that occurs over time and is characterized by emotional exhaustion and a combination of negative attitudes" (Kreitner & Kinicki, 1989, p.574). According to Schuler and Huber (1993) people suffering from job burnout, reveal the following three distinct symptoms:

* emotional exhaustion
* depersonalisation; and
* a sense of low personal accomplishment

According to Kreitner and Kinicki (1989) attitudinal characteristics of burnout are:

- fatalism (feelings of lack of control over work)
- boredom (lack of interest in performing the task)
- discontent (sense of unhappiness with one's job)
- cynicism (tendency to undervalue job content and rewards received)
- inadequacy (feelings of not being able to meet objectives)
- failure (tendency to discredit one's performance by concluding to be ineffective)
- overwork (feelings of having too much tasks to perform within an inadequate time span)
- nastiness (tendency of being rude and unpleasant towards co-workers)
- dissatisfaction (feelings of being unjustly rewarded for one's efforts)
- escape (desire to give up and get away from it all)

Kreitner and Kinicki (1989) provided a model of burnout, as presented in figure 5. According to Kreitner and Kinicki (1989) burnout develops in three phases, which can be illustrated as follows:

DEPERSONALISATION	FEELING OF LACK PERSONAL ACCOMPLISHMENT	EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION
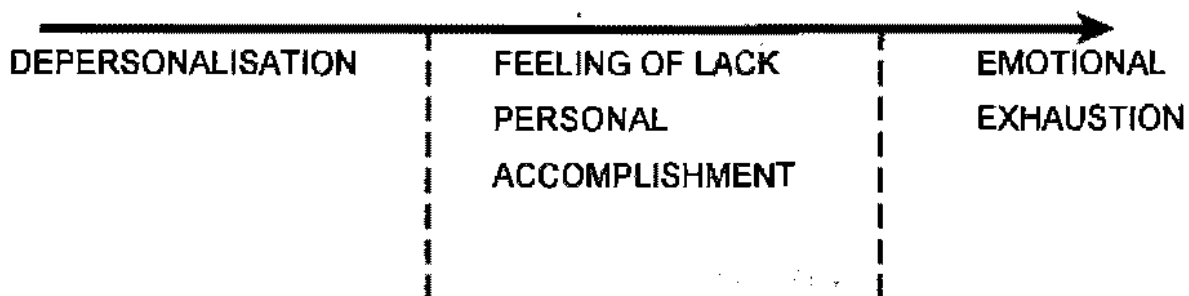
In describing managerial implications of stress, Callahan, Fleenor and Knudson (1986) indicated several observable characteristics of the over-stressed individual such as:

- chronic fatigue
- anger towards those individuals making demands
- self-criticism for putting up with demands

- cynicism, negativity and irritability
- a sense of being besieged
- hair-trigger display of emotions
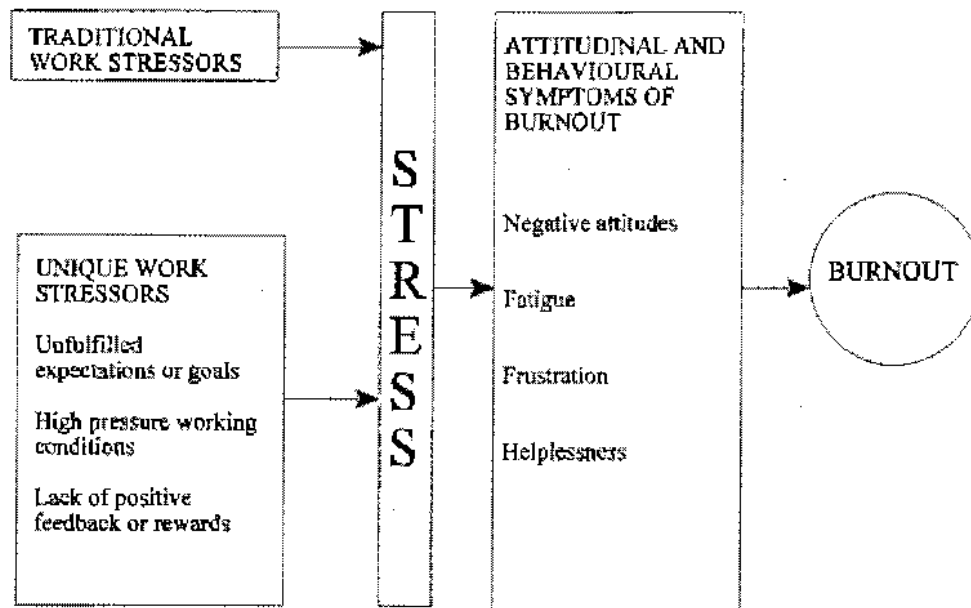
Figure 5: **A Model of Burnout** (Adapted from Kreitner & Kinicki, 1989, p.576)

A study conducted by the National Institute for Occupational Safety in the USA during 1975 indicated the second highest incidence of stress to be found among office workers (Callahan et al, 1986). A 1980 study found that video-display terminal operators had the highest stress of all occupational groups (Callahan et al, 1986).

According to Kreitner and Kinicki (1989) burnout is significantly associated with:

- Lack of feedback
- Low job satisfaction
- Desire to quit one's job

- Impairment of personal relationships (both family and work relations)
- Insomnia
- Absenteeism
- Taking more frequent rest breaks at work

An additional factor linked with occupational stress is *substance abuse*. According to Kreitner and Kinicki (1989) many individuals rely on mood-altering substances such as alcohol and drugs to relieve stress. Not only does substance abuse negatively affect job performance, but also product quality and job safety (Kreitner & Kinicki, 1989).

3.2.2 Stressors intrinsic to the job

Stressors intrinsic to the job are more likely to feature as stress agents among blue collar workers than professional groups (Sutherland & Cooper, 1990). As a result, stress sources will be defined by the nature of the job.

According to Sutherland and Cooper (1990) it is necessary to include the following as stressors intrinsic to the job:

- physical demands
- task requirements for the job

Another aspect which evolved from the Hawthorne studies is the significance of "subjective reactivity" to physical environmental factors (Sutherland & Cooper, 1990). According to Cooper and Payne (1995) most frequently mentioned environmental stressors include:

- density and crowding (example of overload) and/or lack of privacy
- high noise levels and vibrations and/or soundwaves
- temperature extremes
- air movement
- background colour

- illumination
- increase in computer video terminals

An example is traditional versus open plan offices. Managers and professionals reported lower perceived privacy following a change from a traditional to open plan office design (Cooper & Payne, 1995). Research found that unpleasant working conditions, the necessity to work fast, to expend a lot of physical effort and working excessive and inconvenient hours were related to poor mental health (Sutherland & Cooper, 1995).

3.2.3 Role in the organisation

The most widely examined source variables in managerial stress research are role conflict and role ambiguity. According to Cooper and Payne (1995) various variables have been found to be either positively or negatively correlated with role conflict and role ambiguity. The following variables are often found to be positively correlated with role conflict and role ambiguity:

- tension and fatigue
- absenteeism
- leaving the job
- anxiety
- psychological and physical general strain

Variables found to be consistently negatively correlated with role conflict and role ambiguity include:

- job satisfaction
- physical withdrawal
- supervisory satisfaction
- performance
- job involvement

- decision making
- organisational commitment
- tolerance for conflict
- group cohesion
- reported influence
- participation
- task identity
- feedback
- job satisfaction across several sublevels

3.2.4 Organisational structure

According to Cooper and Payne (1995) antecedents of work stressors can be divided into three categories:

- contextual (subsystem, shift)
- role (job level)
- task (autonomy, complexity, interdependence, routine and closeness of supervision)

According to Cooper and Payne (1995) the following work stressors should be considered:

- inter-unit conflict
- technical problems
- role frustration
- efficiency problems
- staff shortages
- short lead times
- superfluous meetings

Results indicated that both job level (low, medium, high) and subsystem (administration, prediction-limited variety, prediction-wide variety, technical support and boundary) related significantly positive to levels of work stressors (Cooper & Payne, 1995).

3.2.5 Interpersonal relationships within the organisation

As presented in figure 6, five levels of needs associated with occupational satisfaction can be identified.

Self-Actualisation	Attaining personal growth and fulfilment at work
Autonomy	Taking independent work actions; having the authority to make basic and important decisions
Esteem	Being positively regarded by co-workers and managers for what one does and who one is
Occupational Social needs	Developing friendships and deriving satisfactions from good interpersonal feelings and a sense of helping others
Occupational Security needs	The foundation of all other job needs: feeling certain and secure in one's position

Figure 6:   A Hierarchy of Occupational Needs (Brodsky, 1988, p.430)

According to Brodsky (1988) the above shows the needs, from the most fundamental (occupational security needs - feeling secure in one's position) to the highest need (self actualization - feeling fulfilled and self-actualisation in one's occupation). As a result, relevant to the second level of the hierarchy, sources of work stress can come from the social system (co-workers). It can be expected that individuals in stressful jobs will be more dissatisfied with their co-workers since these individuals are senders of role expectations (Cooper & Payne, 1995).

According to Cooper and Payne (1995) research have indicated the following:

* the more social contacts were concentrated within a formally defined work area, the higher the emotional exhaustion, particularly for informal contacts

- the greater the ambiguity (lower the accuracy score regarding social interactions), the greater the personal accomplishment
- professionals who were ambiguous regarding their social interaction with other members of staff (low accuracy) and concentrated their social interactions with workers of their own formal subgroup scored higher on depersonalization

3.2.6 Career development

Career development can be defined as "the process of improving an individual's abilities in anticipation of future opportunities for achieving career objectives" (Rothwell & Kazanas, 1994, p.252). According to Rothwell and Kazanas (1994) a career consists of the organised structure and sequence of patterns in the work life of the individual. As result, career planning is a continuous process. It is expected of organisations to manage the careers of their employees. Career management efforts are one way of ensuring that employees are being offered opportunities to develop themselves, as is it giving the organisation the opportunity to create a pool of internal talent (Rothwell & Kazanas, 1994).

According to Armstrong (1995) career planning shapes the progression of individuals within an organisation in accordance with:

- assessments of organisational needs; and
- the performance, potential and preferences of the individual

Although career planning is the sole responsibility of the individual, management thereof is the co-responsibility of the individual and the organisation (Rothwell & Kazanas, 1994). According to Armstrong (1995) career plans should recognise that:

- individuals within the organisation should receive recognition as individuals with unique needs, wants, and abilities

- individuals will be motivated by an organisation responding to their aspirations and needs
- as they are given the right opportunities, encouragement and guidance, individuals can grow, change and seek new directions

Career development can also be defined as the continuous adaption of the individual in respect of predictable change in needs over a period of time (Arthur & Kram, 1989). Career planning focuses on the mutual interaction between individual and interaction (Schein, 1978). According to Schein (1978) in order to ensure an effective and continuous interaction, the assumption is for the following aspects to be satisfactory to both parties:

- that the organisation offers good outcomes to the individual; and
- that the individual effectively contributes to the organisation

3.2.6.(a)   Interaction and individual development

The process of interaction which exists between individual and organisation can affect the outcomes of both parties in a positive or negative manner. According to Arthur and Kram (1989) the focus on individual level should be on the correlation between:

- individual level of commitment; and
- degree of challenge being offered by the job or task

According to Arthur and Kram (1989) such correlation will occur where the organisation grants the individual the opportunity to:

- develop task competencies
- develop a career identity
- learn the functioning of the organisation, in other words, how things are handled within the organisation

The organisation should also make provision for promotion, expansion of internal employment possibilities and recognition of personal performance (Arthur & Kram, 1989).

3.2.6 (b)   Career stress

Various aspects in the economical, political, technological and socio-cultural environment play a large role in creating career stress, especially as result of the turbulent nature thereof (Schein, 1990).

According to Arnold, Cooper and Robertson (1995) the following can cause pressure and strain:

- lack of job security
- fear of redundancy
- obsolescence or retirement
- superfluous performance appraisals

Frustration of having reached one's career ceiling or having been over promoted can result in extreme stress (Arnold et al, 1995).

Unemployment, whether temporally or permanently, represents stress in its severest form. There will always be those individuals experiencing financial problems, who do not possess the necessary skills for re-employment (Schein, 1990).

Regarding the *middle career crisis*, it can be best explained by the theory of Levinson (Arnold et al, 1995). According to Arnold et al (1995) Levinson proposed that in each era of adulthood (early, middle and late) alternate stable and transitional periods exist.

The first era is *early adulthood* (ages 17-22), followed by *entering the adulthood* (ages 22-28). The first mentioned is characterised by the individual seeking a niche in the adult world, with the latter as main task to explore various roles whilst keeping options open. The *age of transition* occurs between the ages of 28 and 33, during which the individual appraises his or her experiences and searches for a satisfactory lifestyle, followed by a stable *settling-down phase* with the implementation of that lifestyle.

However, according to Arnold et al (1995) a mid-life transition occurs between the ages of 40 and 45, with the lifestyle reappraised, often with considerable urgency and emotion. This stage is referred to as the *midlife crisis* (Arnoid et al, 1995). According to Arnold et al (1995) it becomes clear at this stage whether or not earlier career ambitions were achieved. These factors can lead to substantial life changes, for example a change of career (Arnold et al, 1995). Alternatively, this person may reaffirm his or her commitment to current lifestyle, and increase the effort put into it.

The midlife transition is followed by *entering middle adulthood* (ages 45-50), then the *age 50 transition* (ages 50-55) and the *culmination of middle adulthood* (ages 55-60). According to Arnold et al (1995) these are all concerned with implementing and living with midlife decisions. These are followed by late *adult transition* and *late adulthood*. Any form of change will have an impact on the middle career crisis. It is very difficult to change jobs or retire during this phase. Especially when organisations are restructuring, the middle career crisis can coincide with severe stress (Schein, 1990).

Many organisations reduce the number of levels in their organisational hierarchy. As result, they disband well-established career routes, with the result that people find themselves in a job for much longer than they had anticipated. According to Arnold et al (1995) this is often referred to as a *career plateau*. It is defined by Arnold et al (1995, p.342) as "the point in a person's career when the likelihood of additional increases in responsibility is very low".

Although career plateauing can occur for many reasons, and produce many reactions, not all negative, it does indeed sometimes happen that the individual is unhappy about the situation. This may produce negative work attitudes and poor performance (Arnold et al, 1995). With an increase in human resource talent, early retirement has become one of the methods of handling this challenge. According to Schein (1990) the biggest problem in this regard is the financial security of the individual.

Due to factors as those mentioned above, it might occur that individuals are employed by various organisations over their life span. As result, they need to be retrained each time they need to make a change. Traditionally, the focus was on recruitment, but more recently, it shifted towards recruitability (R.H. Waterman, J.A. Waterman & Collard, 1994). According to Waterman et al (1994) the "new agreement" between employer and employee entails the sharing of responsibility for the maintenance and enhancement of the recruitability of the individual inside and outside the organisation. As result, individuals need to possess competitive skills in order to gain employment.

3.2.7 Contemporary sources of managerial stress

According to Cooper and Payne (1995) the following sources have begun to receive increased research attention:

- mergers and acquisitions
- retrenchment and budget cutbacks
- job future ambiguity and insecurity
- occupational lock-in

3.3 CONSEQUENCES OF STRESSORS IN THE WORKPLACE

In order to illustrate the link between stressors, stress and its consequences, it is important to develop an integrative model of stress and work. An appropriate model in this regard is the working model as illustrated by Ivancevich and Matteson (1993). For

the purposes of this research the model has been adapted as presented in figure 1 . The model was selected since it concentrates on work-related issues. It divides stressors into the following categories:

- individual stressors
- group stressors
- organisational stressors

The individual experiences these stressors on psychological and/ or physical level, with consequences which includes aspects on subjective, behavioural, cognitive, physiological and organisational level (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1993). It is important to note that these consequences merely represent some of the potential effects that are associated with stress and similar consequences need not be experienced by all individuals (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1993).

As suggested by the model, the following five categories of potential consequences of stress can be identified:

- subjective effects
- behavioural effects
- cognitive effects
- psychological effects
- organisational effects

According to Ivancevich and Matteson (1993) strength consequences are partially influences by type of employment, namely blue-collar (skilled and unskilled) and white-collar (professional and nonprofessional) workers. Unskilled workers reported the following major stressors causing their psychological state:

- underutilisation of skills and abilities
- poor person-job match, considering desired amounts of responsibility, lack of participation, and ambiguity about the future

Although skilled blue-collar workers shared some of the stressors and consequences with their unskilled counterparts, they particularly reported above-average utilization of skills and responsibilities. Although white-collar professionals reported the fewest negative consequences, all groups indicated that job performance was effected by the factors mentioned.

3.3.1 Individual stressors

According to Ivancevich and Matteson (1993) individual stressors include:

- Role conflict
- Role ambiguity
- Work overload (quantity and quality)

Whether *role conflict* results from organisational policies or other individuals, it can be a significant stressor for some individuals. Facets of role conflict include the following:

- being torn between conflicting demands from, for example, a supervisor about the job
- being pressured to get along with individuals with whom one is not compatible

In order for employees to perform their job well, they need certain information regarding what is expected from them. Important aspects in this regard are individual rights, privileges and obligations. A lack of understanding in this regard will cause *role ambiguity*. Research results indicated a significant relation to low job satisfaction and to feelings of job-related threats to people's mental and physical well-being (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1993). Research indicated that the more ambiguity an individual reported, the lower the individual's utilization of intellectual skills, knowledge and leadership skills (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1993).

With regard to *work overload*, distinction can be made between quantitative and qualitative overload (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1993). *Quantitative overload* refers to having too many tasks to perform or insufficient time to complete a job. *Qualitative overload* refers to individuals feeling a lack of required ability to complete their tasks or too high performance standards to be met. Apart from biochemical changes, elevations in blood cholesterol levels can occur (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1993).

Ivancevich and Matteson (1993) presented an underload-overload continuum, as presented in figure 7. As suggested by figure 7, the optimal stress level provides the best balance of challenge, responsibility and reward. Regarding responsibility, the more responsibility for people reported, the more likely the individual may be to smoke heavily, experience high blood pressure and elevated cholesterol levels (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1993).
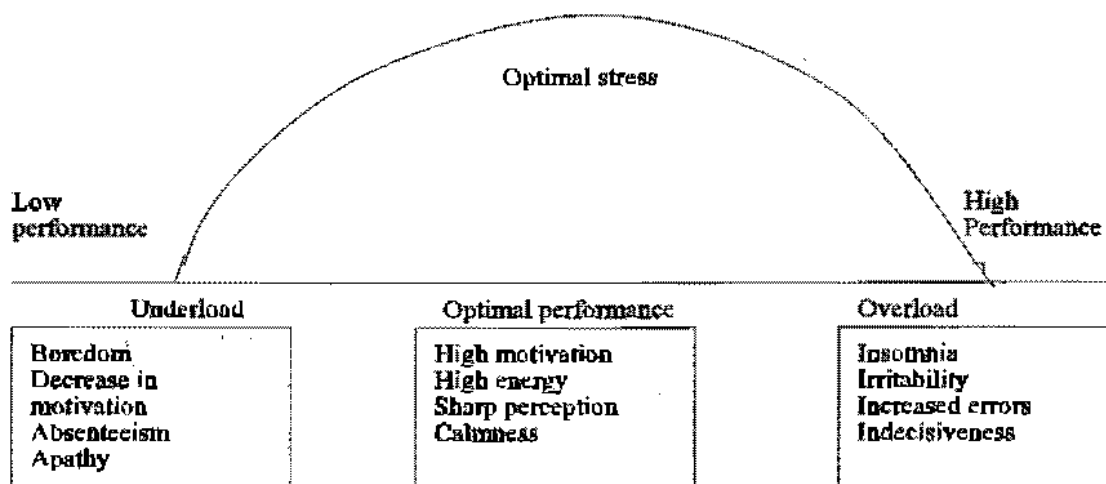
Figure 7: **The underload overload continuum** (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1993, p.253)

3.3.2 Group stressors

Organisational effectiveness is influenced by the nature of inter-group relations (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1993). Some individuals experience many group characteristics

as highly stressful. Research indicated good relationships among group members as central factor in individual well-being (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1993). According to Ivancevich and Matteson (1993) poor relations include the following:

- low trust
- low supportiveness
- low interest in listening to and trying to deal with problems than being confronted by same

Mistrust in interpersonal relationships relate positively to high role ambiguity, which in turn leads to inadequate interpersonal communication and low job satisfaction (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1993). It can be illustrated as follows:

```
                                              INADEQUATE INTERPERSONAL
POOR  ───────────────►  HIGH      ↗          COMMUNICATION
INTERPERSONAL           ROLE      ──►
RELATIONSHIPS           AMBIGUITY ↘          LOW JOB SATISFACTION
```
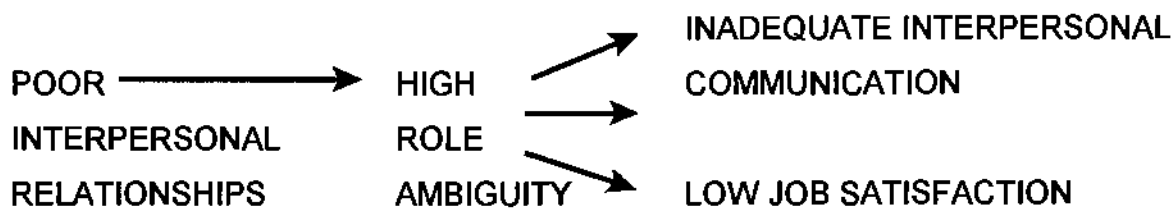
3.3.3 Organisational stressors

It is always problematic endeavouring to identify the most important stressors within the organisation. The following can be singled out:

- level of participation
- organisational structure

Participation refers to " the extent that a person's knowledge, opinions, and ideas are included in the decision process" (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1993, p.254). People may

react differently to problems surrounding participation which can include:

- frustration due to delays often associated with participative decision making; or
- view participation in decision making as a threat to the traditional right of the supervisor or manager. From a traditional point of view these parties anticipate having the final say

According to Ivancevich and Matteson (1993) research indicated that individuals in the least bureaucratically structured arrangement experienced the following in comparison to those in medium and tall structures:

- less stress
- greater job satisfaction
- more effective performance

The majority of studies which examined the relationship of organisational level to health effects suggested the risk of contracting health problems such as coronary heart disease (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1993). According to Ivancevich and Matteson (1993) research surrounding stressors in the workplace indicated the following:

- a relationship existing between stressors at work and physical, psychological and emotional changes in individuals
- no universally acceptable existing list of work stressors, with each organisation having its own unique set
- due to individual differences, a stressor which is disruptive and unsettling to one individual, is regarded as challenging to another.

With due consideration to the above, main reasons why organisations should take account of stress and act accordingly, include according to Armstrong (1995) the following:

- they have the social responsibility to provide a good quality of work life
- excessive stress causes illness
- it can result in inability to cope with the demands of jobs which create more stress; and
- stress can reduce employee effectiveness and, as result, organisational performance.

INTEGRATION

The aim of chapters 2 and 3 was to provide a theoretical framework with regard to the concept of stress and non coping (or maladaptive coping) within the work environment. Firstly, it dealt with the concept of stress and non coping (or maladaptive coping) with due consideration of factors predisposing an individual to stress, individual resources, and more specifically, Sense of Coherence (SOC) as coping resource. In order to create a framework for non coping (or maladaptive coping) it was deemed necessary to clarify the concept of coping.

Secondly, since this research will be focussed on the phenomenon of non coping on middle management level, an attempt was made to provide a theoretical framework of stress and coping, and, as result, non coping within the work environment. Within the boundaries of the provided framework a empirical study was conducted to investigate the experience of non coping in the workplace on middle management level.

CHAPTER 4:   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1   INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 referred to the fact that, since much stress experienced by individuals originates in organisations, they may be unable to cope due to various work-related issues. The concepts of stress and non-coping were discussed in chapter 2 with reference to certain factors predisposing on individual to stress, stages in the coping process and coping strategies and defence mechanisms.

The aim of chapter 3 was to provide a theoretical framework of stress and coping, and as a result, non-coping within the work environment. Chapter 4 will provide clarification on the research methodology applied during the investigation.

4.2   STEPS FOLLOWED DURING THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

The following steps were followed during the process:

-    Step one: Problem statement
-    Step two: Population identification
-    Step three: Identifying measuring instruments and data collection
-    Step four: Data analysis

4.2.1 Problem statement

The effects of stress are many and varied. Whilst some effects are positive such as self-motivation, stimulation to work harder, an increased inspiration towards a better life, others are disruptive and potentially dangerous.

Since much of the stress experienced by individuals originate in organisations, individuals may be unable to cope due to various work-related issues. In order to understand the impact of the experience of non coping on industrial mental health, it is important to investigate the phenomenon of non-coping of individuals, especially on managerial level.

The research problem can be stated as follows:

How do individuals experience the phenomenon of non coping on middle management level ?

Subsidiary questions

- Which particular stressors in the workplace contribute to the experience of non coping ?
- What consequences are experienced as result of non coping in the workplace ?
- What role do individual characteristics, for example sense of coherence, personality hardiness, potency, stamina, learned resourcefulness and locus of control play in terms of non coping ?

4.2.2 Population identification

The study group consisted entirely of employees at the head office of the organisation occupying positions on middle management level, with participation being voluntary. In this way the problems emanating from sampling were effectively avoided. From a possible 130 respondents, 40 responded, representing 31% of the total target population.

In order to investigate the experience of non coping in the work environment, a case series was selected as research strategy. A case series is where one "... draw on several cases to illustrate some particular phenomenon ..." (Higgins, 1996, p.61).

4.2.3 Identifying measuring instruments and data collection

During this study, the following instruments were applied:

- a written questionnaire (Sense of Coherence questionnaire as published in Antonovsky, 1987)
- individual interviews as part of a case series

4.2.3 (a)   The Sense of Coherence (SOC) questionnaire

Since this research is based on the paradigm of Salutogenesis and more particularly the concept of sense of coherence as proposed by Antonovsky (1987), the Sense of Coherence questionnaire as published in Antonovsky (1987) was applied as measuring instrument in order to determine the various levels of respondents regarding the concept of sense of coherence, and its underlying concepts. Since the constructs applying to this instrument were discussed in chapter 2, attention will focus on the administration thereof.

The process of data collection was personally conducted by the researcher, who consistently informed participants of the purpose and steps of the investigation. The instrument was distributed personally and the target population was requested to forward completed questionnaires to the researcher.

Since participants were from various departments within the institution, contamination of results due to inter-discussions were minimised. This process was conducted over a period of two months, whereafter all completed questionnaires were analysed in terms of the related constructs.

4.2.3 (b)   Personal interviews

Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with an identified sample of participants, based on the results of the instrument mentioned in section 4.2.3 (a) in this chapter.

In reference to the dynamic interrelatedness of the SOC components listed in table 1 under chapter 2, the criteria for selecting the sample are listed in the table below.

Table 2:   Criteria for selecting participants as part of an identified sample for individual interviews

TOTAL SCORE (SOC)	COMPREHENSIBILITY	MANAGEABILITY	MEANINGFULLNESS	TYPE	AMOUNT OF INTERVIEWEES
HIGH (Above average)	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	1	3
HIGH (Above average)	LOW	HIGH	HIGH	2	1
MODERATE (Average)	HIGH	LOW	LOW	6	1
LOW (Below average)	LOW	LOW	LOW	8	4

The aim of the selection was to choose individual middle managers who have shown a particularly low or high SOC, with the inclusion of that individual displaying a moderate (average) SOC.

Due to the fact that stress is "an adaptive response, mediated by individual characteristics and/ or psychological processes, that is the consequence of any external action, situation, or event that places special physical and/ or psychological demands

upon a person" (Kreitner & Kinicki, 1989, p.564), and since much of the stress experienced by individuals originates in organisations (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1993), it is important to recognise potential sources of stress at work, as discussed under chapter 3. Considering this, sources of managerial stress in the work place explored during interviews are listed in table 3.

Table 3:   **Sources of managerial stress**

Stress in the job itself	Stressors intrinsic to the job such as work load and low decision making latitude
Role-based stress	Stress associated with role conflict, role ambiguity and responsibility
Interpersonal relationships	Superiors, colleagues, subordinates as well as interpersonal demands
Organisational change	Changes in organisational structure, job assignments, reporting relationships (including restrictions on behaviour and the politics and culture of the organisation)
Unplanned interruptions	Unplanned interruptions that disrupt the normal execution of duties

4.2.4 Data analysis

The procedures and statistical techniques will be discussed in terms of *quantitative procedures and statistical techniques, qualitative procedures* and the *integrated quantitative and qualitative procedures.*

4.2.4 (a)   Quantitative procedures and statistical techniques

This section refers to the quantitative procedures,relating to the instrument discussed

in section 4.2.3 (a) of this chapter. First the *obtaining of the total score* will be discussed followed by a discussion of *ranking scores by means of frequency analysis.*

4.2.4 (a) (I)   Obtaining the total scores

The quantitative instrument was scored in accordance with guidelines provided by Antonovsky (1987).

4.2.4 (a) (ii)   Ranking scores

Sub and total scores were ranked by means of frequency analysis, with the assistance of an appropriate computer package (QUATRO PRO - Numeric and graphic tools). According to Kerlinger (1986, p. 128) the paradigm for frequency analysis can be presented as follows:

Categories	Sample
Low	
Medium	Frequencies
High	

Within the context of this research it can be presented as follows:

Sense of Coherence (SOC)	Middle managers
Low (below mean)	
Moderate (mean)	Frequencies
High (above mean)	

According to Huysamen (1987, p.23) a frequency distribution refers to a table reflecting categories of measurement together with an indication of the amount of cases per category, with the highest and lowest scores representing the probable highest and lowest boundary respectively of the class interval. Thus, the sub and total scores of the instrument were tabled in accordance with this definition.

Furthermore, based on the principles relating to normal distributions, the skewness and kurtosis of the distribution of sub and total scores were also obtained.

4.2.4 (b)   Qualitative procedures

This section refers to the qualitative procedures, relating to the qualitative methodology discussed in section 4.2.3 (b) in this chapter. With reference to the section 4.2.3 (b) and with due consideration of discussions under chapters 2 and 3, the qualitative procedures are now discussed.

Once the interviewees' verbatim reports were transcribed, they were analysed by applying the technique similar to that of the *Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)*. This was conducted with due consideration of categories mentioned in section 4.2.3 (b) of this chapter. The following underlying principles (Bellak, 1975, p.60) were considered:

- repetition of themes
- unusual wording
- typical methods of solving problems
- frequency of occurrence of an idea
- determination of clichés
- selecting alternate interpretations (decision between two possible interpretations)

The following process is suggested by Bellak (1975, p.61):

- Read the entire protocol for:

    - suggestive leads (mood, unusual plots, unique verbalization, methods of solving problems and frequency of specific themes)
    - the formulation of tentative interpretations
    - questions to be investigated further

- Analyse basic ideas and structural characteristics and compare with plot norms
- Consider each story as a unit in order to identify, among others, the conflicts, the relationship, to decide whether material is wishful, autobiographical, or superficial and to select hypotheses on the basis of consistency
- Consider all stories as one organised combined unit
- Integrate interpretive hypotheses into a final summary evaluation

As stated under section 2.5 of chapter 2 non coping or maladaptive coping is defined as "contending with stress in a manner such that the source of the stress is ineffectively or inadequately addressed, and the stress either remains or is compounded as a result" (Cohen, 1994, p.174).

According to the paradigm of salutogenesis, Sense of Coherence represents one of the resources utilized by individuals to cope with the demands of stress. Regarding this, as stated under section 2.3 of chapter 2, Antonovsky (1987) is of the persuasion that sense of coherence is a major determinant in maintaining one's position on the health ease/ disease continuum and the movement toward the healthy end.

4.2.4 (c)   Integrated quantitative and qualitative procedures

According to Leedy (1993, p.143), with reference to the uses of quantitative and qualitative research, there has been a growing emphasis on combining these approaches during single studies. As quoted in Leedy (1993, p.143) it can be stated that "many studies could be enhanced considerably if a combined approach were taken". As a result, this study is a combination of such approaches.

To integrate the quantitative and qualitative results, the following steps were taken:

Step 1:   With reference to section 4.2.4 (a), the total scores of respondents on the sense of coherence questionnaire were listed, ranging from low to high

Step 2:   As summarized in table 2 under section 4.2.3 (b), interviewees were selected as part of a case series, based on the results of step 1

Step 3:   A final classification of the selected sample of the case series was made as a result of steps 1 to 2, based on criteria similar to that mentioned under section 4.2.4 (b)

Step 4:   The following information is derived from the results of step 3:

- the role individual characteristics such as sense of coherence (SOC) play in terms of non coping or maladaptive coping; and
- linked to the above, particular stressors in the work environment contributing to the experience of non coping or maladaptive coping

INTEGRATION

The aim of chapters 2 and 3 was to provide a theoretical framework regarding the concept of stress and non coping or maladaptive coping in the work environment. The aim of chapter 4 was to provide clarification on the research methodology applied during this investigation. Within the boundaries of the provided framework and research methodology, the results of the study will be discussed under chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

As discussed under chapter 1, the general aim of this research is to investigate the phenomenon of non coping among individuals on middle management level in the workplace. Mainly, to investigate the extent to which non coping influences industrial mental health on middle management level. In so doing, answers were sought to the following questions:

- which particular stressors in the workplace contribute to the experience of non coping?
- what role do individual characteristics such as sense of coherence (SOC) play in terms of non coping?
- what consequences are experienced as result of non coping in the workplace?

In order to find answers to these questions, quantitative and qualitative techniques were applied.

The findings of this study will be discussed as follows:

- A brief referral to source data
- The quantitative results will be presented, with reference to the total scores obtained, followed by explanations regarding inferences made from the profile of the target group
- The qualitative results will then be discussed, with explanations regarding inferences made from such results
- The quantitative and qualitative results will be integrated and interpreted

5.2   SOURCE DATA

As stated under chapter 1, the quantitative measuring instrument is applied in order to differentiate between individuals displaying a low and high Sense of Coherence (SOC) with N = 40. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with an identified sample of nine individuals, based on the results of the total scores on the mentioned instrument. The aim of the selection was to select individual middle managers as part of a case series who have shown a particular low or high SOC, with the inclusion of that individual displaying a moderate SOC.

5.3   QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Regarding the quantitative instrument i.e. the Sense of Coherence Questionnaire of Antonovsky (1987) applied during this study, responses of 40 middle managers were processed. Thereafter, total scores were ranked by means of frequency analysis in order to obtain the average. Based on the principles relating to normal distributions, the skewness and kurtosis of the distribution of total scores were also obtained. Statistical processing occurred with the assistance of an appropriate computer package (QUATRO PRO - Numeric and Graphic Tools).

Table 4 reflects the total scores, with reference to the three sub-scores of the three components of the concept of SOC , ranked from low to high.

The data is presented per respondent in terms of Comprehensibility (CO), Manageability (MA) ans Meaningfulness (ME), ranked in terms of total scores from low to high.

Table 4: Sense of Coherence: Sub and Total scores

RESPONDENT	COMPREHENSIBILITY (CO)	MANAGEABILITY (MA)	MEANINGFULNESS (ME)	TOTAL SCORE
40	35	34	27	96
25	40	41	28	109
34	36	42	36	114
5	45	42	32	119
10	46	37	38	121
32	43	41	38	122
7	40	46	38	124
28	38	46	40	124
26	42	50	34	126
33	52	46	31	129
17	44	42	44	130
39	41	49	41	131
12	49	48	42	139
24	43	54	42	139
30	50	45	46	141
15	44	50	48	142
37	41	54	49	144
2	55	49	44	148
22	50	54	46	150
23	52	53	45	150
14	52	54	46	152
19	59	54	41	154
31	58	52	45	155
36	54	56	46	156
1	57	49	52	158
11	54	57	50	161
35	55	57	49	161
4	57	55	51	163

RESPONDENT	COMPREHENSIBILITY (CO)	MANAGEABILITY (MA)	MEANINGFULNESS (ME)	TOTAL SCORE
8	60	56	47	163
18	57	59	47	163
27	55	57	51	163
6	51	59	55	165
13	57	58	51	166
21	57	59	51	167
20	58	59	51	168
3	56	59	55	170
29	64	59	51	174
16	64	60	52	176
9	60	67	55	182
38	70	66	56	192

The distribution of total scores is presented as follows:
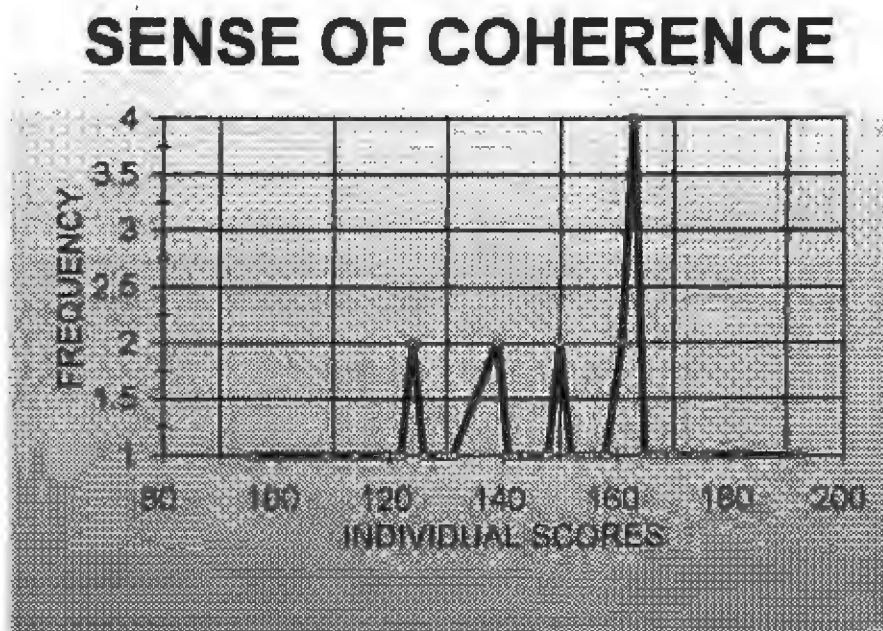
With due consideration of the components of the concept of SOC, the descriptive statistics of the population is presented in table 5.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics for the population on the SOC questionnaire

	C	MA	ME	TOTAL SCORE
MAXIMUM	70	67	56	192
MINIMUM	35	34	27	96
MEAN (x)	51.35	51.875	44.775	140.675
STANDARD DEVIATION (s)	8.429	7.596	7.536	3.436
VARIANCE	71.054	57.702	56.794	472.225
SKEWNESS	- 0.185	- 0.351	- 0.692	- 0.317
KURTOSIS	- 0.652	- 0.281	- 0.157	- 0.446

In reference to table 2 in section 4.2.3 (b) under chapter 4, nine individual middle managers who completed the SOC questionnaire, were included as part of a case series in this study. In reference to table 4, table 6 below reflects the total scores of the case series from low to high, with reference to the three sub-scores of the three components of SOC.

Table 6: Sense of Coherence (SOC): Sub and Total scores of the case series

RESPONDENT	COMPREHENSIBILITY (CO)	MANAGEBILITY (MA)	MEANINGFULNESS (ME)	TOTAL SCORE
40	35	34	27	96
25	40	41	28	109
34	36	42	36	114
10	46	37	38	121
2	55	49	44	148
22	50	54	46	150
3	56	59	55	170
16	64	60	52	176
9	60	67	55	182

The distribution of the total scores of the case series is presented as follows:
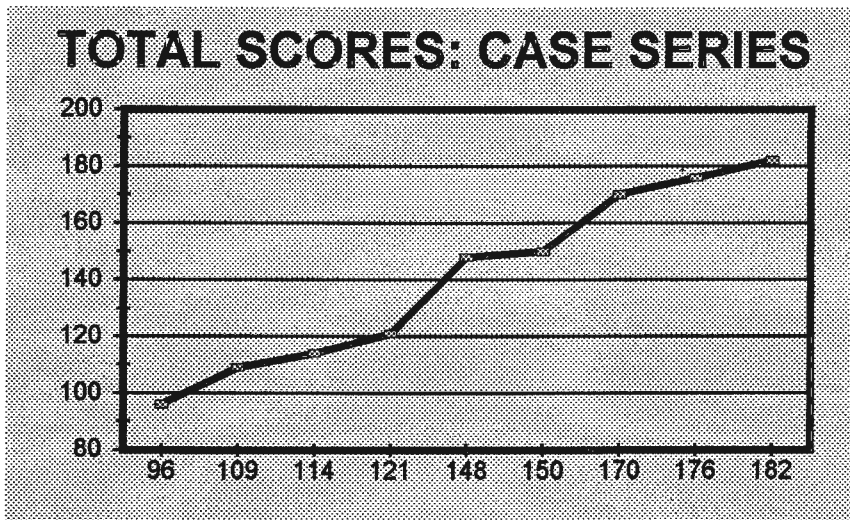
TOTAL SCORES: CASE SERIES

With due consideration of the components of the concept of SOC, the descriptive statistics of the target population of the case series is presented in table 7.

Table 7: Descriptive statistics for the case series on the SOC questionnaire

	C	MA	ME	TOTAL SCORE
MAXIMUM	64	67	55	182
MINIMUM	35	34	27	96
MEAN (x)	49.111	49.222	42.333	140.667
STANDARD DEVIATION (s)	10.529	11.465	10.782	31.729
VARIANCE	110.861	131.444	116.25	1006.75
SKEWNESS	- 0.100	0.174	- 0.239	- 0.032
KURTOSIS	- 1.458	- 1.373	- 1.403	- 1.699

5.4 QUALITATIVE RESULTS

This section refers to semi-structured interviews conducted with individual middle managers as part of the case series identified in section 5.3 under this chapter. It includes a summary of the response of each interview, with due consideration of tables 2 and 3 in section 4.2.3 (b) under chapter 4, and steps followed in accordance with section 4.2.4 (b) under chapter 4. The summary is ranked from the lowest to the highest total scores as presented in table 6 under section 5.3 of this chapter.

All interviews were pre-arranged and took place in a private area in the workplace. Since the researcher is employed by the same organisation, interviews with individuals working in open plan systems were conducted in the office of the researcher. In this chapter, in each case a general summary will be provided, followed by the themes identified, supported by applicable quotes from the interview.

The following is important to note:

- five of the nine interviewees were Afrikaans speaking, thus their responses should be viewed as accurate translations rather than exact quotations
- each summary expresses the opinion of the interviewee and should under no circumstances be interpreted as official statements

Respondent 40 (Total score: 96)

Stressors in the workplace: Relevant aspects such as **incompetency, indecision, lack of quality workers, procrastination** and **organisational transformation** were identified as stressors. The respondent feels that these aspects have a **negative impact on the functioning and management of the Department.** He views it as one

big headache - aspects that in any case can not be addressed within the organisation and feels forced by the situation to accept certain aspects.

He expressed his emotions as follows:

- with the situation here one is forced to accept certain things - it's very difficult
- yes - definitely definitely because one is restricted in many ways - it would have been different should one be allowed to address the people's behaviour
- things definitely changed - I can't describe it further but definitely - I tell you it is absolutely the case

Furthermore, he is of the opinion that middle management is involved in strategic planning but uncertain whether or not it makes a difference.

He stated it as follows:

- I believe one is still involved but whether it serves any purpose presently I do not know since there are too many role players to really execute strategic planning since it has become a clumsy process

Regarding **clarity of job boundaries**, the respondent confirmed that he was personally involved in the drafting of his job description. Yet, remains in an acting capacity after being in position for three years with no confirmation as yet.

Regarding this matter, he expressed his feelings as follows:

- promises have been made and not kept
- it totally destroys one's morale
- it should break a person down - but it differs from person to person how one handles it - OK there were a few weeks that I really went through a heavy dip but my work never suffered - but my personal life did - but, on the contrary, the quality of my work increased

- it has a negative impact on oneself - your work circumstances as well as your division - because should personnel notice someone bringing his side is treated in such a manner, they think how they will be treated in future

Uncertainty: It seems the respondent feels uncertain, powerless.

He expressed it as follows:

- really - one feels powerless
- it's a battle to keep personnel positive

The necessity of training: The respondent feels that training is advantageous, at least from a theoretical point of view.

He stated it as follows:

- if one must be honest - such training is advantageous from theory - note theory only - unfortunately a thing can only be tested in the practice - I would say it's important for one to undergo training but one must be able to apply in practice as well
- unfortunately, this is the great dilemma at this institution - people not possessing knowledge and the capability to manage, are placed in management positions

Availability of managerial guidelines: The respondent confirmed that he had no official guidelines when taking up current position within the organisation. However, he felt he was competent enough to succeed.

He stated it as follows:

- I had no training or guidelines but knew I was competent enough otherwise I would not have accepted

Unplanned interruptions: The respondent seems to experience such interruptions not as irritating, but views it as part of the management process.

He expressed it as:

-      one must be able to handle it - if it irritates you you are not fit for such a position

Exhaustion: The respondent experiences signs of exhaustion after a day's work.

He expressed it as follows:

-      well to be honest - when I reach home I don't want to do anything - you just want to rest - you're not in the mood for anything - it taps one completely
-      I can't switch off anymore - doesn't matter to which side - I can't do it anymore

Lack of social support: It appears that the respondent experiences a certain lack of social support.

He stated it as follows:

-      99% of the time I keep it to myself
-      I discuss stress now and then with neighbours rather than my wife - you don't want to burden her with your own problems since this is an outsider standing totally independent from what's currently happening - or your stress circumstances
-      it happens once in a while, but not to such an extend that one can totally unload and thus can't say well now I'm feeling good - on the contrary - many times one works oneself up

Regarding support received from colleagues, he stated it as follows:

- yes up to a point - I can still discuss what is bothering me with my colleagues - specifically because they also realise the situation
- but basically as I say up to certain point one can discuss certain aspects - but still much need to be held back - because one does not want to cause depression and morbidity among everyone - or make them negative

Bottling-up: It appears that the respondent does not easily share his emotions and inner thoughts with others.

He expressed himself as follows:

- all that I do - basically it remains inside
- I communicate much lesser - although I never was a great communicator
- I basically can not address things directly what I'm supposed to do, there are other ways nowadays

Despair: The respondent seemingly experiences a sense of despair.

His feelings were expressed as follows:

- many times one sits and try to produce - but you just can't find an answer - it's almost like running in a circle - seeing what is happening - that which one can not answer and as I say I can't place my finger on it - most probably as a result once again of my circumstances - what I want to do to rectify it - but there's nothing

He also referred to the fact that he tries to avoid TV news and newspapers (with the exception of the sporting pages) since it has a negative effect on him.

Unworthiness: The respondent does not place great value on himself as person, as is clear from the following statement:

-        I as a person is not important - what I do is important

Resources applied: The respondent portrays himself as a believer in the Deity, though at the same time expressed doubts regarding the applicability thereof in certain circumstances.

He stated it as follows:

-        I am a believer but I do not think I utilize that in finding solutions - many times I try but unfortunately the weak human that feels almost it's not worth to certain extent - but especially nowadays one realises that one should rectify this - in one's heart - and with one's God and belief that over a period things will happen according to His will
-        I believe it might be a solution in certain instances

Respondent 25 (Total score: 109)

Uncertainty: The respondent seems to experience feelings of uncertainty regarding the situation at his organisation.

He stated it as follows:

-        if one looks at the policy of the organisation the last few years and so - I do not say it deteriorated - but one is sometimes not sure of one's direction - that is stress in itself

Lack of rewards: The respondent is of the opinion that rewards are lacking in his organisation. He also feels it has a motivational problem.

He expressed his opinion as follows:

- people want to be rewarded for what they're doing - that's maybe one part of the stress
- it has become very difficult to motivate people

Inconsistency: The respondent is of the opnion that inconsistency is present within his organisation.

- that's maybe one part of the stress with the other part inconsistency in decision-making

Additional work stressors: He also is of the opinion that the following aspects add to stress in the organisation:

- different guidelines or methods/ styles of management
- gaps in communication
- people do not communicate with one another (i.e. top management with lower management levels) - possible problematic communication channels

Inconsistency: The respondent feels that it is difficult to execute inconsistent decisions.

He stated it as follows:

- yes of course - it's difficult since it doesn't help to tell one person you may not do something but someone else says to him/ her yes you may do it - I suppose one can mention examples - but it does make execution of decisions difficult

- inconsistency creates confusion - I do not think it's a healthy situation

Confusion regarding level of autonomy enjoyed by middle managers: *Regarding this aspect, the response was as follows:*

- on the one hand it is propagated that heads of divisions are accountable regarding the management of their divisions - whether you obtain your goals is your problem - but on the other hand at meetings your hands are tied by prescribed procedures

Impact of stress experienced: The respondent confirmed that personal stressors have a relative impact on his life.

He expressed himself as follows:

- yes of cause - inside and outside the working environment - especially mine is inside the work environment

Inadequate social support: It seems the respondent experiences inadequate social support, both inside and outside family circles. It need be noted that both respondent and his spouse are employed by the same organisation, although in different positions.

This aspect became clear through the following statements:

- between me and my wife we try to support one another emotionally but as I say it's the same situation
- colleagues and friends inside the work environment and so on - no not really

The respondent indicated that he has one close friendship inside his work environment (a colleague in a similar position within the organisation).

He expressed his thoughts on this matter as follows:

- we know what it's all about - so we share the same stress and so on - we can moan together

Healthy stress is a challenge: Regarding whether or not he experience stress as a challenge, he confirmed that it is in the case of healthy stress.

The respondent defined healthy stress as follows:

- when you have a project to run and you know you have to achieve something otherwise there's a problem - having to reach a particular goal

Regarding stress related to reaching target dates, the respondent is of the opinion that stumbling blocks occur in his efforts to reach goals or target dates.

Work load: Regarding work load the respondent is of the opinion that this depends on internal structures inside one's division. He stated that it could be difficult where eg. a supervisor is absent for some or other reason, but is of the opinion that such situations are transient. He expressed the need for importance that one should have freedom in controlling one's own work load.

Level of authority: The respondent sees level of authority as how one applies it.

He expressed it as follows:

- I think that many difficult matters we have to handle ourselves anyway
- Middle management is being grinded from two sides - higher management and lower management demands

Training: He is of the opinion that management training is important especially at the commencement of duties as head of division/ department.

Role clarification: Regarding whether or not his role is clear he confirmed that he knows what is expected from him relating to matters described in his job description and that he in fact was involved in the drafting thereof.

Making sense out of life: Respondent seems to make sense out of life.

He expressed his thoughts on this matter as follows:

- I think life makes sense
- Life is full of opportunities and a person has a destiny to fulfil in life - every person lives for a purpose

Entrapment and frustration:

- There's so many opportunities in life and one lives once only - one must make the best of it but it's easy to say and I think that's one of the most frustrating things to say
- one must grab one's opportunities and so on but it's not that easy due to circumstances against which one weighs oneself - maybe consciously or subconsciously at the end of the day it becomes like a spider web - it's difficult to get out of it

Frustration, anger and fear: The respondent confirmed that he has sometimes experiences sleeping problems and expressed his experience as follows:

- yes - that often happens - it's a frustrated feeling - a feeling of anger and fear - all those things woven together

Respondent 34 (Total score: 114)

This respondent refused the use of a tape recorder. As a result, without influencing the flow of conversation, the researcher attempted to capture as much information as possible during the interview session.

The themes expressed during the interview were:

Rapid change and transformation:

- The respondent stated that rapid changes and transformation in the country as a whole, at his place of work and within the family environment contribute to his experience of stress, both positive and negative.

Safety and security situation: Experiences the safety and security situation in the country as impacting on women and the family life in a restrictive manner.

Need for regulations: Respondent expressed the necessity for rules and regulations to exist in the work environment. Many procedures exist within his own department (some of them detailed). However, he stated that many duties are also performed at a moment's notice.

Depression:

- Respondent stated that, like other people, although he can keep head above water, he experiences depression - claims that people often isolate themselves and try to remain positive
- According to respondent, when possible downsizing was discussed as part of organisation strategy, he experienced episodic insomnia.

Restricted career movement:

- He stated that it is not easy to make career moves within the organisation and that he expects to remain in his current position for a long time
- He stated that he had already discussed this matter with the head of department but that he will have to accept a lesser salary should he move within the organisation - which he finds unacceptable.

Importance of communication: The respondent stated that level of communication within his particular department is of a high standard due to the fact that the employees form an interactive work group.

Lack of cooperation:

- Although the respondent stated that support is present within his work group
- He is of the opinion that, within the organisation, it is not the case. He feels that people are trying to bring others down rather than cooperate.

Perception of life:

- According to the respondent life is what one makes of it
- One must make provision for the future

Respondent 10 (Total score: 121)

Experience stress: The respondent admitted that, although not every day, she experiences stress.

She expressed herself as follows:

- Yes I definitely feel stress - uhm - not every day

- I like to be busy and I like to sort of interaction with people but the stress factor well the thing that really stresses me is when for example my direct boss phones me and says do this - if I don't do it absolutely immediately he can't understand

It seems that the respondent experienced some of her situations so intensely that she suffers from insomnia.

She stated it as follows:

- I've realised that the only way to get the job done and to get it done well as well as I can possible do is to make decisions - there was something just last week - that was quite traumatic so I spent plenty of sleepless nights

It seems that she also experienced stress in her private life at some stage.

She expressed herself as follows:

- I had to bring up two children on my own and that in itself was stressful
- My family has suffered through when my stress level was too high

She also stressed that she experienced the stress situation, especially after her husband died and she had to bring up the children, as a challenge to a great extent. She also stated that she does not experience that same level of stress in her home life, since her children are now adults.

Direct bosses do not really know what her job entails: Respondent stated that her immediate bosses do not really know what her job entails and that she is of the opnion that her division is misplaced in the current department.

She is also of the opinion that it is plain ignorance on their part of what the job entails.

Frustration and stress: The respondent seems to be answerable to more than one boss which seems to create frustration and feelings of stress.

She expressed her emotions as follows:

- Yes I get frustrated and sometimes I get very stressed out when I got pressure from two and you try to explain to them all and I got to answer to other departments as well

Lack of recognition: It seems that she does not receive adequate recognition.

She stated it as follows:

- they won't come to me they won't give me that sort of recognition

Job clarification: The boundaries of her job seem to be clear to the respondent, since she was involved in drafting her own job description.

Lack of decision-making support: The respondent is of the opnion that a lot of her decisions can backfire, but she has to take them sometimes at a moment's notice. It seems that individuals higher in the hierarchy are not always available to take decisions outside her own decision-making boundary.

She expressed herself as follows:

- I take a lot of decisions that are - that I shouldn't take if the backfire - I know I'll be in trouble
- If it's something I know that the decision has to be made immediately - then very often I've done it

Importance of training: The respondent indicated that she views managerial training as important and thinks that it was lacking when she was "thrown into the deep end". Yet she feels that new managers have it better since training is now available, especially for those dealing with clients.

Inadequate expertise: She is of the opinion that individuals in higher management positions do not possess the necessary expertise to occupy their positions.

She stated this as follows:

-        You see you got all these people now in - key positions that don't have the background or expertise - which is not their fault necessarily - but I do feel for example that they could have a more hands-on approach

Coping mechanisms: The respondent stated that she is a Christian and it seems that she places her trust to this to a large extent.

She supported this by stating:

-        my Christian beliefs are what keep me from getting very deeply depressed or anything like that

Respondent indicated that she participates in physical exercise by visiting a gymnasium and indicated that she finds that useful in handling stressful situations.

Frustration and anger: The respondent stated that she experienced at times anger and sleeplessness during stressful situations.

She expressed it as follows:

-        I'm just sort of like exploded

- I don't sleep well when that happens

It seems that she deals with these emotions by writing about her situation with the aim of handing it to her head of department - most of the times she simply discards it. *She goes on stating it as follows:*

- what upset me was that it had to go to that point - we should be able to go and speak to them

She also expressed uptight feelings.

She stated it as follows:

- I think if I start getting uptight I think well - I've only got myself to look after now - and God has looked after me thus far - so - why worry about it - it will sort out one way or the other

Non-confrontational: The respondent made it clear that she actually is a non-confrontational person. However, it seems that at times she has to act assertively in her job (which she perceives as confrontational).

She stated it as follows:

- 'cause I'm not a person that likes confrontation that very much - but I decided that this no I've had enough of this

Lack of social support: It seems the respondent experience a lack of support and has basically one person only (her daughter) who she feels understands her situation.

She stated it as follows:

- No I don't really think so 'cause I don't think they understand

- Yes I - I do find that to be a problem to a certain extent - my one daughter has a good idea of what it's like - but I know with my brother, my brother-in-law, my sister and stuff like that - they'd no idea

However, she remarked that she and her colleague sharing the same office support each other to a great extent.

However, she expressed her thoughts in this regard as follows:

- I think we support each other to a great extent - obviously every now and again we have a problem but we also sitting ridiculous because we're constantly on the phone with people and we shouldn't have to sit - so close together - we need more space

Respondent 2 (Total score: 148)

Work stressors: The respondent stated that the most stressful factors at present are caused by non functional computer support systems, together with new staff members being allocated to her section.

She stated it as follows:

- that's you know what stops you from doing your work - if they're not functioning properly - things don't get fixed quickly enough
- I've got new staff at the moment - so work tends to be slower and so on - that's not their fault - that causes stress for me obviously

Clear job boundaries: According to the respondent her job boundaries are clear due to the fact that she was involved in drafting her job description, as well as in developing her section.

She supports this by the following statement:

-       The Department Head knows very little what I do so he doesn't interfere - it's one of the joys of my job that I do my own thing - I'm left to do my own thing

Unplanned interruptions: The respondent stated that unplanned interruptions, especially by clients, was probably her biggest cause of stress, which has been reduced since new employees were added to the section.

Another aspect that seems to create stress problems is too many meetings.

The respondent expressed this as follows:

-       Administrative things like the meetings those things that take forever and they always concern me that causes me stress because I've got work to do - too many meetings and they're too long

Increased work load: The respondent stated that her work load was increased at some stage, which made her work life more difficult, since she also had to train new staff members.

Uncertainty: Although the respondent expressed thoughts of uncertainty regarding the future at the organisation, she stated that it is not worrying her that much, yet she still seems concerned.

She expressed it as follows:

-       I think we're all feeling insecure at the moment - none of us are sure what the financial future is

- I'm not particularly worried about myself but one always has that in the back of one's mind

- they will be getting rid of staff that sort of thing does - I believe it inevitably worries one - I wouldn't call it a huge stress

Support from higher management: The respondent is of the opinion that middle management enjoys the support of higher management levels.

She stated it as follows:

- I think they try to give us support

Lack of expertise on middle management level: The respondent is of the opinion that middle management in the organisation lacks expertise.

She expressed it as follows:

- I'm not convinced that middle management here has the expertise to make a difference at that level - I think we need competent people at that level

Unfair promotions: The respondent is of the opinion that promotions in the organisations are unfair and that that creates stress, relegating her statement to that under lack of expertise.

She stated it as follows:

- I think it's a matter of concern - the people often seem to be promoted - that creates unhappiness at the end and that's not good

Lack of training: The respondent is of the opinion that training is lacking on middle management level.

She stated it as follows:

- I think there's a big lack of training

Lack of formal guidelines: She stated that formal guidelines on how to manage a section/ department are lacking in the organisation.

She expressed herself as follows on this matter:

- Yes - basically swim or drown - there weren't formally written guidelines as such
- as far as the management of the section is concerned that in a sense was rough - very much

Lack of time for relaxation: The respondent stated that she has no leisure time. She seems to be deeply involved in activities of her school going daughter, which takes up much of her time. Otherwise, she might now and then spend a relaxing time with friends.

She stated it as follows:

- I wish I had time for relaxation
- I'm very involved with my daughter
- we just relax - going to movies or something like that you know just having fun - then I can forget about my work place and feel less stress - those sort of things do relief a bid

Good social support: The respondent stated that she enjoys social support from friends, two of whom are also colleagues.

She expressed it as follows:

- yes - yes I have very good friends - well two of them particular work here
- it does help the fact that they have the similar background
- I think it makes a big difference - if you got someone that you can talk to that actually does have that background to understand so to speak

Powerlessness: The respondent stated that, due to the crime rate in the country, and the fact that she and her daughter lives alone, she experiences feelings of powerlessness.

This she stated as follows:

- I'm extremely aware of the possibility of becoming a crime victim - and I think it's that powerlessness - when you got a kid that worries you two

Insecurity: The respondent also stated that she experiences feelings of insecurity due to the crime situation in the country.

She stated this as follows:

- It's just the two of us - and I'm sure that people know - they hang around there and I'm sure they know it's just the two females there - they watch and that makes you feel insecure and I just had a whole lot of fencing done and burglar bars put in and so - I'm very security aware

Perception of life: The respondent stated it as follows:

- life is too complex to just be incaptulated in a simplistic little aphorism
- There isn't a choice - so you do it - just do it - just get on with it because you don't have a choice

- I'm not religious
- I think I'm a fairly logical person - I can look for a solution to a problem - reasonably rational for the most part

Resources applied: The respondent stated that she applies inner strength to keep going.

Respondent 22 (Total score: 150)

Transformation and subsequent unplanned interruptions: The respondent stated that, since transformation, the situations increased that whilst meetings are prescheduled according to a set annual programme, there are so many interruptions that it becomes more and more difficult to work according to schedule.

He stated it as follows:

- recently as transformation increased a situation has developed that - meetings are scheduled according to an annual programme - but so many things are interfering so one must handle the normal programme and then these things come in-between
- one handles it - but it places unnecessary stress on a person

Transformation: The respondent is also of the opinion that transformation is not handled in the proper manner.

He stated it as follows:

- afterwards transformation becomes revolution if brakes are not put into it to allow people to think about aspects - it doesn't happen in this place anymore - I got the impression that transformation has become a principle and is not a method anymore

Lack of time: The respondent stated that, in certain instances, he needs to react on important documentation with 15 minutes prior to decision making. It seems it upsets him.

He expressed his feelings in this regard as follows:

- now I ask you - in quarter of an hour's time - how can one sit in a meeting - you must also contribute - this sort of thing really upsets me

- sometimes, at important management meetings they say - well here is the agenda - one to two days prior to the meeting the handed out important documentation for discussion - and then at the doors they still hand out more documentation - it could be a whole new order that needs to be instituted - an then it's handed out at the door and decisions must be taken - that places unnecessary stress on one because it effects the entire organisation set-up - it effects the future of one's Department

Demotivating talk by top management: The respondent stated that top management does not talk with one voice. The one moment, when visiting the department, it is stated that, once the early retirement packages have been sorted out, staff must put shoulder to the wheel in making the organisation effective again. Then, after the finances had been sorted out, more negative talk comes from management.

He expressed his feelings on this matter as follows:

- I myself are quite in my years - actually I'm at the prime of my life - I have all that knowledge and skills - but now suddenly there is a cloud hanging over one's head - you need to motivate people under you

Career plateau: The respondent indicated that several senior staff members are in their current positions for more than a decade. He indicated that this places stress on the individual.

Frustration: The respondent stated that the career plateau situation mentioned above leads to feelings of stress, not only for the individuals concerned, but also for the Head of Department.

He stated it as follows:

- there is no opportunity for them - unfortunately that also creates frustration - probably also stress but also frustration with me - also with the Head of Department
- you can not keep people at senior level in your department for a decade and hope that they will be satisfied and deliver the same quality of work

The respondent also stated that, although he comes to work in a positive mood, then the un-planned interruptions happen.

He expressed this experience as follows:

- that's what I'm telling you what's giving a person great frustration if you planned your day in your thoughts and you scheduled it in your diary - then these other things happen

Lack of involvement of middle management in strategic planning: The respondent is of the opinion that middle management is not involved in the strategic planning process at the organisation.

He stated it as follows:

- Yes - undisputable - with the move from eurocentrasism towards afrocentrasism one would have expected a more participative style - but it doesn't work like that - one hears of issues but are not consulted

- another thing - earlier we always had the system that an issue is debated before submission to higher authority - nowadays things are referred in a hastily manner to top management - with all due respect - how can I be responsible for something if I feel I'm not part of the management team

- this must be particularly stressed - the fact that people storm into one's office and ask - but what is this now again - then you yourself has no idea what happened

- to summarize - we are suppose to be very important functionaries - we are actually suppose to be the liaison mechanism with top management - but I think the liaison mechanism does not function strongly - maybe at certain points - but sometimes management has another agenda and we do not receive such agenda in time for it to be debated

Lack of guidelines for decision making: The respondent is of the opinion that the organisation is currently addressing this issue as there are no existing guidelines. However, within his department urgent issue are being dealt with to a certain extent.

He stated it as follows:

- well I think they're addressing it now - there are no guidelines

- to a certain extent one is walking into a vacuum - you got to take decisions and in transformation one has to rely on oneself

- within the Department however, we deal with urgent matters by means of a day management

- many times issues are unloaded on middle management from top management and the latter seeks an answer the day thereafter

Climate not conducive to initiatives: It seems that the climate within the organisation is not conducive to individual initiatives.

The respondent expressed himself as follows:

- one comes forward with new initiatives - new ideas but it is like a damper exists on the way to the top

Importance of training: The respondent stated that training is of the utmost importance due to the fact that Heads of Department in his department are elected and thus any senior member of staff can become Head of Department. He is also of the opinion that management should establish refreshment training initiatives.

He stated it as follows:

- I feel that management should create a mechanism to train people and not to leave it there but to continually refresh them as various new aspects are added to their field of work, for example the impact of the South African Qualifications Authority Act - I feel that training sessions should exist to bring aspects such as this to one's attention
- I feel that participative management can only succeed if proper training exists
- one actually learns through in-service training but there are certain things which can not be learnt through this and I feel that management should create a mechanism for when someone becomes a new Head of Department to see that he or she undergoes proper training and how channels within the organisation are functioning
- a plus point is the fact that last year a training session was scheduled for all Heads of Department and for three days they participated in a management session - I think that was about time and I must give credit to the organisation for what was achieved

Positiveness: The respondent indicated that he sees himself as a relative positive person - when I'm standing under the shower in the mornings - in my mind my day is actually planned.

Spare time activities: The respondent indicated that he participates in physical exercise and is also into reading.

He expressed himself as follows:

- One has to keep some time out for own relaxation - I'm a jogger - this afternoon I'll be jogging - or I'll be going to the gym - and that's a great lightning detector for stress that builds up from time to time
- what I also love to do - in the evenings just before retiring to bed I read a religious or inspiring book. However, sometimes it's not that easy as one has to perhaps complete a particular work project
- I also spend time on my research projects - this is an incredible outlet due to the fact that one goes away from your place of work - it is unbelievable - but it actually means physical transfer away from the workplace setup

Adequate social support: The respondent indicated that he has adequate social support. However, he stated that, although they have a good relationship, his wife doesn't always understand.

He stated this as follows:

- The point is I honestly must tell you - me and my wife have a good relationship but a wife doesn't always understand - the things you're going through - most of the things one keep to oneself - as you also don't want to take your work home
- I've got a few colleagues at work with whom one can discuss these type of things - and that's important

Life philosophy:

- there was an extreme important turning point in my life when I realised that life is an opportunity - every minute must be utilized

- my religion is also an anchor in my life

Respondent 3 (Total score: 170)

Absence of official guidelines: According to the respondent there is an absence of official guidelines on how to manage a department.

He stated it as follows:

- there is no guidance or guidelines in performing your work more efficiently or smoothly
- the organisation doesn't have any set policies or procedures
- as a middle manager you're basically left on you own to decide what to do in those circumstances without any support from written policy or guidelines or anything
- there is no guideline and there is no policy to assist you with that - now that's a very stressful factor
- the lack of just proper structured guidelines and policies - that's what's very stressful here

Lack of support: The respondent stated that support from top management is lacking.

He stated it as follows:

- there is no support from top management - or even guidance from top management

Management by crisis: The respondent is of the opinion that crisis management is applied within the organisation.

Level of decision making powers: According to the respondent middle managers are indeed the decision makers, despite the fact that they are not involved in strategic management planning. He is also of the opinion that middle managers shy away from decision making.

He expressed his views as follows:

- middle managers at this organisation are actually the ones that are making the decisions and top management simply endorses - so I won't say they're left out of decision making but I would say they're left out of strategic planning
- the ideal situation would be if middle managers and top managers engage in strategic planning together so that the middle managers can understand how to implement and make decisions - they're excluded from strategic planning - and as such it affects their decision making abilities
- a lot of middle managers are afraid of making decisions - they'd rather refer a matter to another person

Analytical thinking: It appears that the respondent utilizes a process of analytical thinking during decision making.

He stated it as follows:

- I usually formulated my decisions from after having done a really thorough background search of the facts and having analysed everything
- I never let stress take the better of me - I always try to find an alternative - I usually try to anticipate alternatives and in that way I'm better to deal with stress factors or factors that may lead to stress

Importance of training: The respondent is of the opinion that training plays a crucial role in preparing individuals for middle management positions, especially with the aim of gaining insight.

He stated it as follows:

- I think it plays a very crucial role
- if you see the manner in which decisions are made in this organisation - it's again the result of a total lack of management training
- they're very limited and the fact that they're limited is because of this lack of management training

Spare time activities: The responded indicated that he does not participate in any specific physical activities but relaxes with family and friends over weekends.

Presence of social support: The respondent indicated that he has a strong support system from family and friends.

He stated it as follows:

- Yes - actually - my friends are actually my peers also - we basically went through education - so while we relax and talk about sports and everything we also talk about work
- with my family we talk about family issues - they support me a lot - I talk to them about my frustrations at work - particularly my wife
- it helps to have a lot of people you can bounce ideas off - and share ideas with - and I do that a lot

Experiences life as a challenge: The respondent indicated that he experiences life as a challenge.

He stated it as follows:

- I do not plan ahead - so I leave it open for a surprise - see the new day as a new thing - a new challenge - new things to do - new ideas to go and explore

Resources applied: The respondent stated that he does introspection in order to seek alternatives to difficult situations, and also relies on his religion in the process.

He expressed this as follows:

- what will give me the will to stay say I will have to carry on - basically I would have a moment of quiet reflection - to see how 'm doing in the situation
- Religion's one of the things - I would say to myself - if God wanted me to do it this way and that's the outcome - it's fine

Respondent 16 (Total score: 176)

Effect of early retirement: The respondent is concerned with the effect of early retirement packages, and their effect on the future functioning of the Department. She is concerned that those experts leaving will not be easily replaced.

She expressed it as follows:

- and it's the whole business of early retirement as how it is effecting our department - this is what's causing a huge amount of stress
- I'm one of those who's taking the early retirement package so - it's concern about my colleagues - it's concern about discipline at the organisation - that's causing major stress at the moment

Enjoys certain amounts of stress: The respondent stated that she functions well on a certain amount of stress. She stated that parts of her job will, due to the nature of her position as Head of Department, contains a stress element. It seems that she anticipates stress in this regard.

She stated it as follows:

- I actually enjoy a certain amount of stress - I mean you expect that - you know it isn't a huge problem
- it's a cumulation of various kinds of stress but I mean - that's something you expect

Unclear boundaries: The respondent stated that, although boundaries were not clear, she accepted it in the spirit of organisational transition. She also stated that she was aware of her responsibilities in terms of broad frameworks.

She stated it as follows:

- No the boundaries weren't clear but - I have always expected the job to be in a spirit of transition
- I never really expected terribly clear boundaries
- I knew what my responsibilities were in terms of broad frameworks and I always expected that they would undergo certain transitions because of the transition period at the organisation

Fair amount of say but not enough participative management: The respondent stated that she is of the opinion that middle management has a fair amount of say but that decision making is still to some extent non participative.

She stated it as follows:

- I think one can make a situation in which you have a fair amount of say in a sense to ensure that you'd get on to certain decision making bodies
- I also think there is still quite a lot of top-down decision making without the right kind of consultation

- I think what this is - decisions are being made on financial grounds at the moment whereas I think the academic implications of these decisions haven't been discussed a lot - I think that's where Heads of Department really should be consulted

Short and unexpected deadlines: The respondent stated that short and unexpected deadlines are stressful. She is of the opinion that it is as a result of bad planning on somebody else's part and that she finds it annoying and unnecessary.

Physical exercises: The respondent stated that she participates in physical exercises in order to relieve stress.

She stated it as follows:

- I have certain things that I do - I mean for example - exercises I found always helps

In control: The respondent is of the opinion that she is in control.

She expressed it as follows:

- I always feel that somehow I can control things provided I kind of think it through a bit
- I don't try to do more than I can do
- I think I can take setbacks - I'm pretty good at picking myself up again when there's been a setback - I can always see what the alternative might have been and I can always weigh up the pro's and con's of any kind of situation
- When you made a decision you turn it into the right decision and you don't look back

Social support is existing: The respondent feels that the adequate social support in her life helps her to cope with stress related issues.

She expressed her thoughts on this matter as follows:

- My family situation is such that most of the people in my family are fairly high flyers and my husband for example lives an extremely stressful life - my daughter does the same - so in a sense we understand

She also stated that, due to the fact that both her husband and herself work long hours, they try to relax on weekends, and if she was unable to do this it would be more difficult to start the next week. She is of the opinion that this type of relaxation is very important.

Challenges: The respondent indicated that she does indeed have certain resources that apply during stressful situations.

She stated it as follows:

- I guess I always sort of set challenges for myself - reachable goals
- I like to set that kind of short term goals and long term goals and I find it very satisfactory if you achieve these kind of step by step

Life philosophy:

- When life hands you a lemon - make lemonade

Respondent 9 (Total score: 182)

Handles stress well: The respondent stated that he handles stress reasonably well and only occasionally becomes annoyed or frustrated with other people. He also stated that,

although one can never really switch off from a day at work, he does not experience it as so stressful.

He expressed it as follows:

- I'm not a person that really suffers from stress I must be honest
- I think I handle stress reasonably well
- I don't get frustrated or annoyed or angry with people - occasionally that obviously does happen under very exceptional circumstances - it would be irresponsible behaviour on the part of somebody - possibly where you try to explain something to somebody and they seem to have less the capacity to deal with that explanation that you given them
- No actually I don't think one does switch off - that's physically not possible - I'm not that kind of person - and I say I don't suffer from stress - one goes home and things still go through your mind not stressing you - reworking it perhaps in your own mind and thinking through and saying to yourself well maybe I will deal with this in the following fashions instead of the way I thought about it yesterday - so you have time to reflect on the issues - I think that's an important aspect in controlling stress

Aware of workload: The respondent stated that he is aware of the work load but not stressed out by it.

He stated it as follows:

- I think I'm aware of the work load but I'm not stressed by the work load

Situation the organisation finds itself in: He stated that a lot of people would suffer from stress as a result of the situation and that he is aware of it - yet it seems not to affect him unduly.

He stated it as follows:

-        lot of people would suffer from stress as a result of the situation the organisation finds itself in - I think I'm aware of it but I don't think it really plays on my mind

Role ambiguity: The respondent stated that he experience role ambiguity. He has recently been replaced as Acting Head of Department with a new Head of Department.

He expressed himself as follows:

-        I think there is role ambiguity at the moment - it's not entirely clear - I have a job description but the responsibilities that one has cumulated over the time of being in an acting capacity - making you still the person to whom they would like to communicate - I think that creates a lot of role ambiguity - not necessarily un manageable but it's there nevertheless

Fair amount of latitude in decision making: The respondent is of the opinion that a fair amount of latitude exists in decision making powers of middle managers. He is also of the opinion that there are those managers who don't want to take decisions and those who can't.

He stated it as follows:

-        a lot of people are in head of departments' positions who do not want to make decisions and there are others who are in that position and because of their ability and their willingness they will make a decision and confront consequences at a later stage

Top management and slow decision making: The respondent is of the opinion that decisions made by top management are too slow.

He expressed his opinion as follows:

- what happens is our management is too loathe to take decisions and to slow to take decisions

The importance of experience: The respondent is of the opinion that experience better equips one to handle stress.

He stated it as follows:

- I think it's a question of experience - that experience does put one in a far better state to deal with situations that could be stressful or confrontational

Adequate social support: It seems that the respondent enjoys adequate social support from family and colleagues.

He expressed his thoughts as follows:

- That's very important - that does certainly happen in our family - and I think that's a very important component - before something becomes a very stressful issue - you talk it out - get it off your chest and you feel comfortable - we talk very often
- I got colleagues at work too which I'm friendly with - if something bothers me I can trod upstairs and talk to them

Spare time activities: The respondent stated that he does not participate in any physical exercises. However, he walks a little bit in the garden with his family and does some fly-fishing form time to time.

He expressed his thoughts as follows:

- I'd like a more relaxed kind of lifestyle - if I do go out I like to go fly-fishing - that's not really that strenuous - it's very relaxing

Life philosophy: The respondent stated that his life is firmly grounded in God and that this a critical issue in his life.

In summary, the results of the qualitative research can be presented in table 8:

Table 8: Summary of themes identified during the qualitative research

SENSE OF COHERENCE (SOC)	WORK RELATED
40:Total score: 96 Uncertainty Exhaustion Lack of social support Bottling up Despair Unworthiness Resources applied: Religion (although doubtful at certain times)	Incompetency Indecision Lack of quality workers Procrastination Organisational transformation Necessity of training Absence of managerial guidelines Unplanned interruptions
25:Total score: 109 Uncertainty Negative impact of stressors in his life Inadequate social support Healthy stress a challenge Making sense out of life Entrapment and frustration Frustration, anger and fear	Lack of rewards Inconsistency in decisions Different management styles Ineffective communication Confusion regarding level of autonomy enjoyed by middle managers Importance of training Workload: Depend on internal structures Level of authority: Depends on how one applies it Role is clear (no ambiguity)

SENSE OF COHERENCE (SOC)	WORK RELATED
34:Total score: 114 Safety and security in the country Depression Perception of life:What one makes of it and making provision for the future	Rapid change and transformation Need for regulations Restricted career movement Importance of communication Lack of cooperation
10:Total score: 121 Experience stress Frustration & stress Coping mechanisms: religion Frustration and anger Non-confrontational Lack of social support	Direct bosses do not know what job entails Lack of recognition Job clarification (no role ambiguity) Lack of decision making support Importance of training Inadequate expertise

2:Total score: 148
 	
Uncertainty
Lack of time for relaxation
Good social support
Powerlessness
Insecurity
Perception of life: just do it
Resources: inner strength
	Non functional computer support systems
	Clear job boundaries
	Unplanned interruptions
	Increased work load
	Adequate social support from higher
	      management
	Lack of expertise on middle management
	      level
	Unfair promotions
	Lack of training
	Lack of formal guidelines

SENSE OF COHERENCE (SOC)	WORK RELATED
22:Total score: 150 Frustration Positiveness Spare time activities: physical exercise and reading Adequate social support Life philosophy: every minute must be utilized	Unplanned interruptions Transformation Lack of time Demotivating remarks by top management Career plateau Lack of involvement of middle management in strategic planning Lack of career guidelines for decision making Climate not conducive to initiatives Importance of training
3:Total score: 170 Lack of social support Analytical thinking Spare-time activities: no physical activities - relax with family and friends Presence of social support Experiences life as a challenge Resources: introspection and religion	Absence of official guidelines Management by crisis Lack of decision making powers Importance of training
16:Total score: 176 Enjoys certain amounts of stress Physical exercises In control Social support is existing Sets challenges (goals) to cope with stress Life philosophy: when life hands you a lemon - make lemonade	Effect of early retirement on dept Unclear boundaries Fair amount of say but not enough Participative management Short and unexpected deadlines

SENSE OF COHERENCE (SOC)	WORK RELATED
9:Total score: 182 Handles stress well Adequate social support Spare time activities: spend time with family and fly-fishing Life philosophy: religion	Aware of work load Situation the organisation finds itself in Role ambiguity Fair amount of latitude in decision making Top management: slow decision making The importance of experience

Thus, themes identified in terms of Sense of Coherence and the concept of stress, and more specifically, non coping, were:

- uncertainty vs certainty
- inadequate vs adequate support
- frustration
- fear
- self-image
- meaningfulness and comprehensibility
- manageability
- insecurity
- resourcefulness
- perception of threat

Most significant themes identified in terms of work-related stress were:

- level of managerial training
- availability of managerial guidelines
- change and transformation
- job uncertainty
- rewards and recognition

- career movement
- unplanned interruptions
- involvement in decision-making processes

5.5   INTEGRATION OF QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE RESULTS

As stated under section 2.2 in chapter 2, various factors predisposing an individual to stress. Distinction is made between psychological and physical stressors such as disease, physical disorders, physical trauma, insomnia, polluted environment, malnutrition and dehydration. Psychological stressors are categorised in term of change, conflict, frustration and pressure. As stated, according to Carson et al (1996), the impact of a stressor depends on factors such as its importance to the individual, duration of the stress, the cumulative effect of stressors and whether the particular stressor is seen by the individual as within or outside his or her own control. It is also important to note that, as stated under section 2.5.1 in chapter 2, individuals may react differently to stress, depending on their perception of the threat and their tolerance thereof.

Since an individual spends a major part of his or her waking life at work, an increase in stress, from whatever source, may show itself as inability to cope with work. A framework for stress in the workplace was provided in chapter 3. As stated under chapter 3, sources of managerial stress include stress in the job itself, role-based stress, interpersonal relationships, organisational change and unplanned interruptions.

Within the boundaries of the paradigm of salutogenesis, Sense of Coherence (SOC) constitutes a major determinant of maintaining one's position on the health ease/disease continuum and of movement toward the healthy end. As a result, SOC forms an important coping resource.

As stated in chapter 1, the purpose of this study is to investigate the experience of the phenomenon of non coping on middle management level, focussing on particular stressors in the workplace contributing to this experience, consequences thereof, and the role of individual characteristics such as SOC in this regard. As stated under section 2.5 in chapter 2, for the purposes of this study, the appropriate definition of non coping is that of maladaptive coping as defined by Cohen (1994, p.74):

> contending with stress in a manner such that the source of the stress is ineffectively or inadequately addressed, and the stress either remains or is compounded as a result

5.5.1 Integration of the quantitative results in terms of the concept of SOC

In terms of table 2 under section 4.2.3 (b), the results of the research in terms of the concept of SOC is presented in table 9.

Table 9: Results of the quantitative technique in terms of the concept of SOC

RESPONDENT	COMPREHENSIBILITY (CO)	MANAGEABILITY (MA)	MEANINGFULNESS (ME)	TOTAL SCORE (SOC)	TYPE
9	60	67	55	182	1
16	64	60	52	176	1
3	56	59	55	170	1
22	50	54	46	150	2
2	55	49	44	148	6
10	46	37	38	121	8
34	36	42	36	114	8
25	40	41	28	109	8
40	35	34	27	96	8

As discussed in section 2.3.4 under chapter 2, individuals displaying type 1 and 8 tends to view the world as either coherent or incoherent. This statement by Antonovsky (1987) was supported by the qualitative research conducted during this study. All individuals identified as *type 1* view the world as coherent. They tend to see life as a challenge, seem to be more in control and tend to handle stress well. In contrast, individuals identified as *type 8* seem to view the world as lesser coherent, experiencing uncertainty, entrapment and frustration, depression and, as a result, do not handle stress well.

According to Antonovsky (1987) high manageability is strongly contingent on high comprehensibility, although this does not necessarily mean that one believes one can manage well. Respondent 22 experiences frustration, but at the same time feelings of positiveness, with a life philosophy that every minute must be utilized. The respondent displayed low comprehensibility coupled with high manageability and meaningfulness, thus fitting the profile of *type 2*. As discussed under section 5.4, the respondent views himself as a relatively positive person, planning his day ahead, approaching his working day in an optimistic manner, whilst at the same time experiencing frustration, especially with reference to aspects relating to career plateaux. As a result, although the respondent displayed a low comprehensibility, he seems to be in control and thus handling his stress in an adequate manner.

Individuals identified as *type 6* can be characterised by inherent instability (Antonovsky, 1987). According to Antonovsky (1987) high comprehensibility together with low manageability leads to a strong pressure to change, with the direction of the movement to be determined by the sense of meaningfulness. In the case of respondent 2, a low sense of meaningfulness was displayed during the quantitative research. During the qualitative research s sense of powerlessness, insecurity and uncertainty were noted. It became evident that the circumstances in the country (such as crime) played a vital role in this regard. As discussed under section 5.4, she stated that, due to the crime in the country, she experiences feelings of powerlessness and insecurity. She also stated that life is complex and that one has no choices but just to keep going. However, it seems that she relies on inner strength and views herself as a fairly logical person, considering solutions to problems in a reasonably rational manner. Thus it seems that,

although she displayed low meaning fulness, she seems to understand the problems confronting her and is strongly motivated to seek out resources.

5.5.2 Integration of qualitative results in terms of sources of stress in the workplace

As discussed under chapter 3, many sources of managerial stress exist in the workplace. During this study various of these sources were explored, as presented in table 3 in section 4.2.3 (b) under chapter 4. With reference to the case series, and in accordance to the summary of themes identified during the qualitative research presented in table 8 under section 5.4, the frequency of work-related themes are listed in table 10.

Table 10: Frequency of work-related themes identified during the qualitative research

WORK-RELATED THEME	FREQUENCY
Rapid change and organisation transformation	3
Uncertainty	3
Necessity of training	5
Lack of managerial guidelines	3
Lack of rewards and recognition	2
Restricted career movement	2
Clear job boundaries	6
Unplanned interruptions	3
Lack of involvement of middle management in strategic planning	2

The above frequencies are graphically presented as follows:

MOST PROMINENT SOURCES

Necessity of training
Clear job boundaries

Less prominent sources
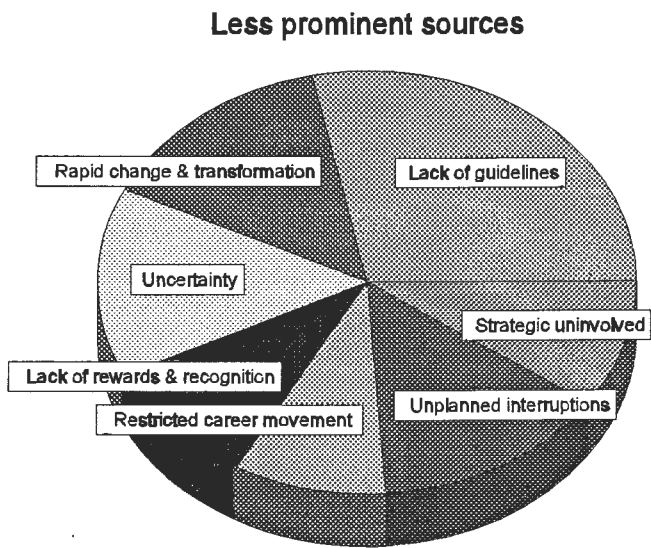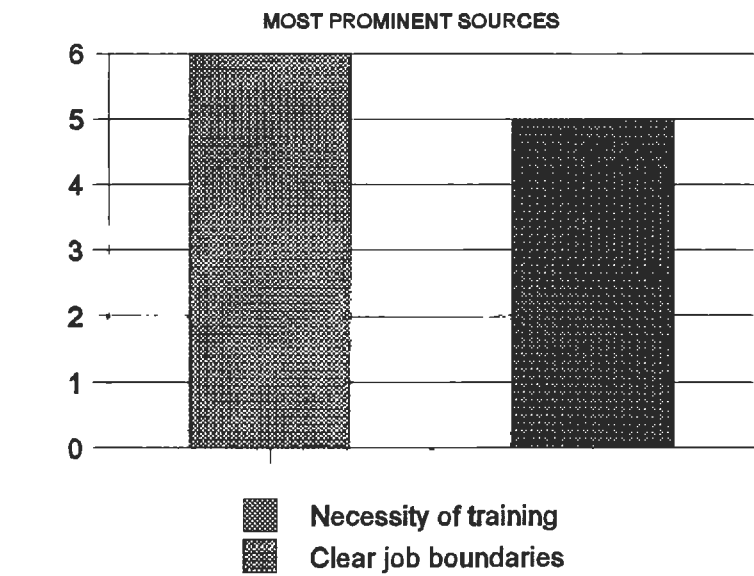
The results from the qualitative study, as presented in the summary of themes (table 8 under section 5.4), support the theories presented under chapter 3.

Regarding **stressors intrinsic to the job**, aspects such as indecision, absence of managerial official guidelines, lack of decision making support, lack of expertise on middle management level, lack of decision making powers and slow decision making by top management was reported. However, some of the respondents did report a fair amount of latitude and participation in the decision making process. Various aspects relating to **roles** have also been identified. Whilst one respondent reported role ambiguity, the rest were of the opinion that their role boundaries are clear.

Some respondents reported aspects such as lack of cooperation among staff members and lack of decision making support, whilst others experience adequate support from higher management in this regard. One aspect that became evident during the research is that, although middle managers are involved in the decision making process, they are not involved in the strategic planning process of the organisation. As a result, various problems relating to decision making and communication occur, acting as stressors.

5.5.3 Integration of qualitative results and sources of stress in the workplace

As stated under section 5.2, various sources of managerial stress were identified during the qualitative research.

In terms of the quantitative results as discussed under section 5.5.1, themes identified during the qualitative research, were consistent throughout all types as identified. Refer to the summary of themes presented in table 8 under section 5.4 and the frequency of work-related themes presented in table 10 under section 5.5.2.

INTEGRATION

The aim of chapter 4 was to provide clarification on the research methodology applied during the study. This was based on the theoretical framework provided by chapters 2

and 3. Within the boundaries of the provided framework and research methodology, the aim of chapter 5 was to provide the results of the study.

Firstly, it dealt with the results of the quantitative research, integrated with the concept of SOC. This was followed by a discussion of the results of the qualitative research, whereby identified themes in accordance with the research methodology provided in chapter 4, were discussed. A summary of themes was presented in terms of both the concept of SOC and work-related stressors, within the theoretical framework provided by chapters 2 and 3.

With due consideration of the theoretical framework provided, and the results discussed in this chapter, the conclusions, recommendations and limitations of this study will be discussed under chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Psychology as science deals with human nature and more specific, human behaviour. As an applied science, Industrial Psychology deals with human behaviour in the workplace. One of the core components of any organisation is its human resource asset. As a result, the field of this research was personnel psychology with the emphasis on industrial mental health. The focus of this research was the experience of non coping on middle management level.

Within the boundaries of the paradigm of salutogenesis, and more specifically the concept of Sense of Coherence (SOC) as presented by Antonovsky (1987), the stated research problem was:

> *How do individuals experience the phenomenon of non coping on middle management level ?*

As a result, the following were investigated:

- *which particular stressors in the workplace contribute to the experience of non coping ?*
- *which consequences are experienced as result of non coping in the workplace ?*
- *what role do individual characteristics (for example SOC) play in terms of non coping ?*

Although various previous research has been conducted relating to the concept of stress and maladaptive coping in the workplace, the results of this study should shed more light on the personal experience of such stress and maladaptive coping. This can be of great value to the field of industrial mental health.

The findings and recommendations of this study will now be discussed.

6.2 THEORETICAL INVESTIGATION

During the literature study emphasis was placed on the experience of non coping or maladaptive coping with particular reference to managerial stress as experienced on middle management level.

Specific reference was made to the concept of Sense of Coherence (SOC) as presented by Antonovsky (1987). The role of the components of SOC such as manageability, comprehensibility and being able to experience life as making sense emotionally (meaningfulness) in coping with everyday life experiences was explored. This also formed the theoretical basis from which Antonovsky (1987) developed the SOC questionnaire, the quantitative technique applied during this study.

Furthermore, various sources of managerial stress was also explored. The results of this theoretical investigation shown that such stressors include:

- stressors intrinsic to the job
- role based stress
- interpersonal relationships and interpersonal demands
- career development
- organisational structure and climate
- the possibility of retrenchments

-   job future ambiguity and insecurity
-   organisational change
-   unplanned interruptions

Another factor considered was *job burnout*, a condition which refers to the fact that peoples' work conditions are characterised by little personal control over the quality of their performance, leading to feeling responsible for their success or the lack of it. It is a process occurring over time, characterised by emotional exhaustion and a combination of negative attitudes. Symptoms of job burnout include emotional exhaustion, a sense of low personal accomplishment, discontent (sense of unhappiness with one's job), cynicism (tendency to undervalue job content and rewards received), inadequacy (feelings of not being able to meet objectives), overwork (feelings of having too much tasks to perform within an inadequate time span), dissatisfaction (feelings of being unjustly rewarded for one's efforts) and escape (the desire to give up and get away from it all). Apart from these symptoms it can also lead to chronic fatigue, anger towards those individuals making demands, self-criticism for putting up with demands, negativism and irritability.

During the theoretical investigation, consequences of stressors in the workplace was also explored. This was based on the theoretical working model of Ivancevich and Matteson (1993, p.246). According to this model, *individual stressors* include role conflict, role ambiguity and work overload (quantity and quality). *Group stressors* refers to the fact that individuals experience many group characteristics as highly stressful. According to Ivancevich and Matteson (1993) good relationships among group members represents the central factor in individual well-being. Particular *organisational stressors* include level of participation (referring to the extend that the individual's knowledge, opinions and ideas are included in the decision making process) and organisational structure. Previous research conducted in this area indicated that individuals in the least bureaucratically structured arrangement experienced less stress and greater job satisfaction in comparison to those in medium and tall structures, leading to more effective performance.

Previous research have shown that at middle management level managing relationships is a threefold task, namely:

-       acting as subordinate towards higher authority
-       acting as equal among peers
-       acting as superior

As a result, the middle manager wears three hats, which can be most demanding and it is difficult to arrive at a consistent pattern of behaviour. Furthermore, a shift in roles is required from middle managers. Traditionally, the role was that of coordination, translation and to act as go-between. More recently, new roles emerged such as to become an initiator, offer more leadership, accept the challenge of taking the initiative, control emotional barriers to taking charge and to take responsibility instead of waiting for delegation.

Previous research conducted in the field of work stress includes examining the prevalence of work stressors among lower, middle and upper management level. The results of such research indicated that middle managers experience significantly more stress than lower and upper management. It is on the basis of such research that the emphasis of this study was based on the experience of non coping on middle management level.

6.3   EMPIRICAL STUDY

Guided by the purposes and aims of this study, both qualitative and quantitative techniques were applied.

6.3.1 Quantitative study

For the purposes of the quantitative research, the Sense of Coherence (SOC) questionnaire was applied. Total scores were ranked by means of frequency analysis

in order to obtain the average. From the initial 40 middle managers who participated, a case series of nine individual managers was selected, with the aim to select those individuals who have shown a particularly low or high SOC, with the inclusion of that individual displaying a moderate (average) SOC.

Regarding the processing of the results from the quantitative research, the following steps were followed:

- the instrument was scored in accordance with guidelines provided by Antonovsky (1987)
- total scores were ranked by means of frequency analysis, with the assistance of an appropriate computer package
- based on the principles relating to normal distributions, the skewness and kurtosis of the total scores were obtained
- by applying appropriate statistical principles, for the purposes of this study:

    - the mean of the total scores was calculated; and
    - those respondents scoring below or above the mean, were regarded as scoring low or high respectively on the instrument

- based on the above, the case series was selected to represent:

    - four respondents scoring above the mean (high SOC)
    - four respondents scoring below the mean (low SOC)
    - that respondent representing the mean (moderate SOC)

- with due consideration of the dynamic interrelatedness of the SOC components (manageability, comprehensibility and meaningfulness) respondents representing the case series were categorized in terms of guidelines provided by Antonovsky (1987)

6.3.2 Qualitative study

Within the theoretical framework, and based on the results of the quantitative study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with all nine respondents representing the case series.

Once the interviewees' verbatim reports were transcribed, they were analysed by applying the technique similar to that of the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT). During this analysis, various themes were identified relating to both the concept of SOC and sources of managerial stress in the workplace.

6.3.3 Integration of the quantitative and qualitative study

To integrate the results from the quantitative and qualitative study, the following steps were followed:

- with reference to section 6.3.1 the total scores of respondents representing the case series on the quantitative instrument were listed, ranging from low to high, with reference to the categorized types according to Antonovsky (1987)
- a summary was provided regarding themes identified during the qualitative study, relating to the concept of SOC and sources of managerial stress in the workplace. This was supported by quotes by the various respondents
- subsequently, the following was derived from the above:

    - the role individual characteristics such as SOC play in terms of non coping or maladaptive coping; and
    - linked to this, particular stressors in the workplace contributing to the experience of non coping or maladaptive coping were identified

- consequences experienced as a result of such non coping or maladaptive coping in the workplace

6.4 FINDINGS

The following findings were derived from the results of this study:

6.4.1 Findings in terms of the instrument applied during the quantitative study

Research information derived from the total scores of the 40 middle managers who participated in the quantitative study, it was found that the scores were evenly distributed along the continuum of the SOC scale, ranging from low to high, with the mean of the population regarded as moderate.

6.4.2 The case series: Findings in terms of the qualitative study in relation to the quantitative instrument

With reference to the concept of Sense of Coherence (SOC), as proposed by Antonovsky (1987), the results from the qualitative study support the theory as proposed by Antonovsky (1987).

Thus, during this study:

- the case series could be categorised in terms of the various types as proposed (type 1,2,6 and 8); and
- the themes as identified during the qualitative study support the theory as proposed

6.4.3 The case series: Findings in terms of the qualitative study in relation to the concept of non coping or maladaptive coping

Regarding the **experience of stress**, all individuals representing the case series experienced similar levels of stress. However, referring to the **coping process**, it became evident during the processing of research information derived from the qualitative study that various coping strategies apply. Individuals displayed either problem-focussed or emotion-focussed coping mechanisms, depending on their perception of the threat and stress tolerance.

Those individuals who displayed a high SOC (above average) seem to view life as a challenge, seem to be more in control, approach life in a positive manner, and thus, seem to handle stress well. Those individuals who displayed a low SOC (below average) seem to view the world as lesser coherent, experiencing feelings of uncertainty, entrapment and frustration, depression and, as a result, do not handle stress well. The individual representing a moderate SOC (average) experienced feelings of powerlessness, insecurity and sees life as being complex. However, the individual tends to rely on inner strength and views herself as a logical person, applying analytical methods in dealing with problems.

In reference to the concept of non coping or maladaptive coping as discussed in section 2.5 under chapter 2, all individuals representing the case series attempt to cope, some adaptively, some maladaptively and some somewhere between these two ends of the coping spectrum. However, due to various sources of managerial stress derived from the qualitative study, the case series in total tends to move towards maladaptive coping.

6.4.4 The case series: Findings in terms of the qualitative study relating to stress in the workplace

From the research information, it was found that various sources of managerial stress

contribute to the levels of stress experienced and thus influencing the coping process in a negative manner.

During this study the most prominent sources were:

- lack of managerial training
- lack of managerial guidelines

Other sources contributing to the level of stress experienced include:

- rapid change and transformation
- job uncertainty
- lack of rewards and recognition
- restricted career movement
- unplanned interruptions
- lack of involvement of middle management in strategic planning

6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

I) Regarding the purpose and aims of this study, the SOC questionnaire as developed by Antonovsky (1987), provided an adequate basis for the qualitatitive study regarding the selection of a valid case series. The use of this questionnaire for the purpose of investigating the experience of non coping or maladaptive coping in the workplace, is thus reliable. However, with reference to the nature of this study, findings might have been inadequate had no qualitative component been included. It need to be noted that this study was conducted with voluntary participants. As a result, a larger population might have shown better results. In view of

these aspects, the researcher is of the opinion that, with the necessary caution, the SOC questionnaire can be utilized in a meaningful manner for research of this nature.

ii) In view of the importance of industrial mental health, it is recommended that:

- adequate worksite stress management interventions be implemented. Such interventions can include job redesign, proper selection and placement programmes and training and development initiatives (not only job-related but also with the aim of personal enhancement such as time management and programmes focussing on various relaxation techniques)

- the establishment of an adequate industrial health clinic at the workplace be investigated with the aim of, not only addressing physical well-being, but also mental well being referring to supportive counselling be available

iii) With regard to sources of managerial stress:

- with particular reference to the lack of training and managerial guidelines, it is recommended that adequate training programmes be developed and that managerial guidelines be provided to all current and new middle managers in the organisation in order to assist them with the execution of their duties

- that, as a result of their strategic importance, middle managers be included in strategic management processes, including the process of transformation

- that the implementation of assessment centres be investigated to support middle managers in their personal and career development processes

- that all other sources as identified be adequately addressed (eg. adequate rewards and recognition)

iv) Due to the historical factors in the country and the redress of certain issues in this regard, the composition of the case series consisted of mostly previously advantaged individuals. The possibility that this group had a contaminated influence on the final findings can cot be excluded. As a result, it is recommended that:

- the results of this study be interpreted in view of this fact; and
- that future investigations take this aspect into consideration.

SOURCE LIST

Antonovsky, A. (1987). *Unraveling the Mystery of Health: How People Manage Stress and Stay Well.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Armstrong, M. (1995). *A handbook of Personnel Management Pactice.* London: Kogan Page.

Arnold, J., Cooper, C.L. & Robertson, I.T. (1995). *Work Psychology: Understanding human behaviour in the workplace.* London: Pitman.

Arthur, M.B. & Kram, K.E. (1989). *Reciprocity at work: the separate, yet inseperable possibilities for individual and organizational development.* In M.B Arthur, D.T. Hall & B.S. Lawrence (Eds), Handbook of career theory (pp 292-312). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bellak, L. (1975). *The Thematic Apperception Test, The Children's Apperception Test and The Senior Apperception Technique in clinical use.* New York: Green & Stratton.

Bergh, Z.C. & Theron,A.L. (1999). *Psychology in the Work Context.* Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa.

Brodsky, S.L. (1988). *The Psychology of Adjustment and Well-Being.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Callahan, R.E., Fleenor, C.P. & Knudson, H.R. (1986). *Understanding Organizational Behaviour: A Managerial Viewpoint.* London: Bell & Howell.

Carson, R.C., Butcher, J.N. & Mineka, S. (1996). *Abnormal psychology in modern life.* New York: Harper Collins.

Christensen, J.F. (1981). *Assessment of Stress: Environmental, Intrapersonal and Outcome Issues.* In McReynolds, P. (Ed.). Advances in Psychological Assessment (Vol.5). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Cohen, R.J. (1994). *Psychological Adjustment: Values, Culture and Change.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Cooper, C.L. & Payne, R. (1995). *Causes, Coping and Consequences of Stress at Work.* New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Frohman, A.L. & Johnson, L.W. (1993). The Middle Management Challenge: Moving from crisis to Empowerment. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Gregory, R.J. (1996). Psychological Testing: History, Principles, and Applications. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Higgins, R. (1996). Approaches to Research: A Handbook for Those Writing a Dissertation. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Hobfoll, S.E. (1988). The Ecology of Stress. New York: Hemisphere.

Ivancevich, J.M. & Matteson, M.T. (1993). Organizational behavior and management. Homewood, II: Irwin.

Kerlinger, F.N. (1986). Foundations of Behavioral Research. Orlando, FL: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Kreitner, R. & Kinicki, A. (1989). Organizational Behavior. Homewood, II: Irwin.

Lazarus, R.S. & Folkman, S. (1984). Stress, Appraisal and Coping. New York: Springer.

Leedy, P.D. (1993). Practical Research Planning and Design. New York: Macmillan.

Patel, C. (1992). Understanding Stress. London: Consumers' Association and Hodder & Stroughton.

Rothwell, W.J. & Kazanas, H.C. (1994). Planning & Managing Human Resources: Strategic Planning For Personnel Management. Amherts, MA: HRD Press Inc.

Schein, E.H. (1978). Career Dynamics: Matching Individual and Organizational Needs. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Schein, E.H. (1990). Career stress in changing times: some final observations. Prevention in Human Services, 8 (1), 251-261.

Schuler, R.S. & Huber, V.L. (1993). Personnel and Human Resource Management. New York: West.

Selye, H. (1993). History of the Stress concept. In S. Breznitz & L.Goldberger (Eds), Handbook of Stress: Theoretical and clinical aspects (pp 7-17). New York: The Free Press.

Silverman, R.E. (1982). Psychology. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Simons, J.A., Kalichman, S. & Santrock, J.W. (1994). Human Adjustment. Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown Communications, Inc.

Strümpfer, J.D.W. (1990). Salutogenesis: A new paradigm. South African Journal of Psychology, 20 (4), 265 - 276.

Sutherland, V.J. & Cooper, G.L. (1990). *Understanding Stress.* London: Chapman and Hall.

Uyterhoeven, H.E.R. (1991). *General managers in the middle.* In Harvard Business Review. Managers in the Middle. Boston: Harvard Business School.

Waterman, R.H., Waterman, J.A. & Collard, B.A. (1994). *Toward a career-resilient workforce.* Harvard Business Review, July/August, 87-95.