

TYPES OF STRESSORS AND COPING RESPONSES TO STRESS AS EXPRESSED  
BY GRADE 10 LEARNERS IN WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY  
(GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING)

OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

BY

JACQUELINE B. LUYT

Student Number: 9317796

APRIL, 2021

MAIN SUPERVISOR: PROF. M. L. MOSTERT (UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA)

CO-SUPERVISOR: PROF. C. WILDERS (UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA)

## **ABSTRACT**

Managing stress has become a vital part of modern life as it affects everyone, including adolescents; coping with stress requires effective strategies in response to daily problems. To facilitate effective coping requires knowledge of the types of stressors that adolescents face and the ways in which they are coping with these stressors, as well as whether there is a difference in coping between genders. This quantitative study was conducted in eight schools in Windhoek, the capital city of Namibia. A sample size of 300 Grade 10 learners was utilised. The researcher compiled a checklist and used a self-report inventory to establish the types of stressors, kinds of coping responses to stressors and gender differences in each. The results indicate that academic factors and examinations, as well as body image, increased stress levels. Adolescents employed both approach and avoidant strategies in coping with problems; however, they rely more heavily on avoidant coping. Furthermore, the results indicate that, overall, females experienced higher stress levels than males. Females were more at risk than males; consequently, adults working with them should be more vigilant and supportive. All adolescents should be taught to acknowledge when they are employing unhelpful strategies, and learn the skills to employ helpful strategies instead.

## Contents

ABSTRACT.....	ii
LIST OF TABLES.....	vi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND/OR ACRONYMS .....	vii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	viii
DEDICATION .....	ix
DECLARATION .....	x
CHAPTER 1 .....	1
INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1 ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY .....	1
1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM .....	4
1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES .....	5
<b>1.3.1. Identification of the types of stressors faced by Grade 10 learners in Windhoek, Namibia .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1.3.2 Identification of the coping responses most frequently employed by Grade 10 learners in Windhoek, Namibia to deal with life stressors .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1.3.3 Comparison of the coping responses between genders among Grade 10 learners in Windhoek, Namibia .....</b>	<b>5</b>
1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY.....	5
1.5 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY .....	6
1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.....	6
1.7 DEFINITION OF TERMS .....	7
1.8 CONCLUSION .....	10
CHAPTER 2 .....	11
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	11
2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	11
2.2 DEFINING STRESS AND STRESSORS .....	11
2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	12
<b>2.3.1 THEORIES RELATED TO TYPES OF STRESSORS .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>2.3.2 THEORIES RELATED TO RESPONSES TO STRESS .....</b>	<b>16</b>

2.4 THE EFFECTS OF STRESS .....	17
2.5 TYPES OF STRESS .....	20
<b>2.5.1 SCHOOL STRESS</b> .....	20
<b>2.5.2 FAMILY AND PEER RELATIONSHIPS</b> .....	21
<b>2.5.3 HEALTH AND APPEARANCE</b> .....	24
2.6 COPING RESPONSES TO STRESS .....	24
2.7 GENDER DIFFERENCES .....	29
2.8 CONCLUSION .....	31
CHAPTER 3 .....	33
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....	33
3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN .....	33
3.2 POPULATION .....	33
3.3 SAMPLE .....	33
3.4 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS .....	34
3.5 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY .....	36
3.6 PROCEDURE .....	37
3.7 DATA ANALYSIS .....	38
3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS .....	38
CHAPTER 4 .....	40
RESULTS .....	40
4.1 INTRODUCTION .....	40
4.2 TYPES OF STRESSORS .....	40
4.3 COPING RESPONSES .....	43
4.4 GENDER DIFFERENCES .....	46
<b>4.4.1 TYPES OF STRESSORS BY GENDER</b> .....	46
<b>4.4.2 COPING RESPONSES BY GENDER</b> .....	49
CHAPTER 5 .....	51
DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	51
5.1 INTRODUCTION .....	51

5.2 CAUSES OF STRESS AS PER THE TOTAL SAMPLE .....	51
5.3 COPING RESPONSES AS PER THE TOTAL SAMPLE.....	55
5.4 TYPES OF STRESSORS BY GENDER.....	58
5.5 COPING RESPONSES BY GENDER.....	60
5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS .....	63
5.7 CONCLUSION .....	63
REFERENCES.....	65
APPENDICES .....	70
APPENDIX A: RESEARCH ETHICAL CLEARANCE (UNAM) .....	70
APPENDIX B: PERMISSION FROM THE OFFICE OF THE PS .....	71
APPENDIX C: PERMISSION FROM THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR .....	72
APPENDIX D: INFORMED PARENT CONSENT LETTER .....	73
APPENDIX E: INFORMED LEARNER CONSENT LETTER.....	74
APPENDIX F: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS .....	75

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Types of stressors experienced by Grade 10 learners in Windhoek, Namibia .....	41
Table 2: Preferred coping responses for the total sample .....	44
Table 3: Coping responses for the total sample based on below average, average and above average .....	45
Table 4: Types of stressors by gender .....	47
Table 5: Coping responses by gender .....	49

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND/OR ACRONYMS**

AR	Acceptance or Resignation
AUD	Alcohol-use disorder
BMI	Body Mass Index
CA	Cognitive Avoidant
CRI-Youth Form	Coping Response Inventory – Youth Form
ED	Emotional Discharge
GAD	Generalised Anxiety Disorder
LA	Logical Analysis
PR	Positive Reappraisal
PS	Problem Solving
SAD	Social Anxiety Disorder
SES	Socio-economic status
SG	Seeking Guidance/Support
SPSS	Statistical Product and Service Solutions
SR	Seeking Alternative Rewards

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Firstly, I would like to thank my main supervisor, Professor Louise Mostert, for her guidance and professional approach to my Master's degree journey. The amount of knowledge that I have acquired from her is unparalleled. Secondly, I would like to thank my co-supervisor, Professor Wilders, for his insight and the wisdom he shared with me during my research writing.

I sincerely appreciate the opportunity accorded me by the University of Namibia to pursue this study and for their continued support.

St Paul's College has backed me without hesitation through all my years of study. I would, especially, like to thank Lesley Saunders, Bridget Jenkins, Ellen Gudde and Iain Guthrie for their unwavering support.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my journey with my fellow class mates, Launa Moolman, Elzaan Swart, Jessica Ulrich and Bianca de Koe. You have all been a source of inspiration and encouragement.

Finally, I would like to thank my cherished husband, Richard, and my children, Mandy and James, as well as my mother, Barbara, to whom I dedicate this research. My family has always supported me in pursuing my studies. I am thankful to all of them.



## **DEDICATION**

This research is dedicated to my treasured mother, Barbara Bianca Mitchell. Her confidence in my ability to achieve my goals has been unwavering throughout my life. She has been a role model to me and taught me about the meaning of perseverance.

I appreciate all the help she has given me during this research and I am thankful for her interest and assistance. She has probably read through this research study as many times as I did. I am forever grateful to her and I love her very much.

## DECLARATION

I, Jacqueline Bianca Luyt, hereby declare that this dissertation is my own original work and no part of it has been plagiarised. Where other authors' work has been employed, this has been acknowledged in the form of in-text citation and in the reference list.

I, furthermore, declare that this work or any part thereof has not been submitted for a degree at any other institution.

No part of this dissertation may be reproduced, stored in any retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by means (e.g. electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the prior permission of the author or The University of Namibia in that behalf.

I, J. B. Luyt, grant The University of Namibia the right to reproduce this thesis in whole or in part, in any manner or format, which The University of Namibia may deem fit.

Jacqueline Bianca Luyt



23 October 2020

**Name of Student**

**Signature**

**Date**

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY**

Coping responses and managing stress have become vital parts of modern life as stress affects all people. Young people typically experience stressful events during the developmental phases from their childhood through puberty to adulthood (Simuforsa, 2013). Specific changes, such as biological, cognitive, social changes and the development of identity, are evidence of situations that can lead to increased stress levels in adolescents (Huli, 2014). Stressful experiences, seen as distress that was not dealt with and resolved, have been linked to health and behavioural problems (Zimmer-Gembeck & Skinner, 2010). Adolescents who are experiencing higher levels of stress or distress display behaviours, such as fatigue, guilt, a depressive mood and dissatisfaction, as well as a sense of failure and irritability (Zhang, et al., 2015). Bhargava and Trivedi (2018) argue that several stressors from different sources underpin psychological, physical and behavioural problems.

According to Roy et al. (2015), stressors in adolescents can be categorised in five broad dimensions, namely school, family, peers, personal health and appearance. In addition, Foto-Özdemir et al. (2016) argue that familial factors, such as interpersonal relationships, loss of a parent, separation and divorce, further contribute to stress in adolescents. The psychological stressors that adolescents grapple with relate to factors such as their personality and self-esteem; consequently, stress management and positive coping responses need to be developed, especially by adolescents, in order to prevent

such maladaptive behaviour (Bhargava & Trivedi, 2018; Huli, 2014; Priyanka & Kshipra, 2017).

A coping response is described as the method employed by an individual to counter, cope and respond to stress. This is done on a cognitive and behavioural level in order to address or manage either external or internal demands placed on the individual (Herres & McCauley Ohannessian, 2014; Papathanasiou et al., 2015). Two types of coping responses are outlined. The first is approach coping strategies which include problem solving and cognitive restructuring to deal with stressful situations. It, furthermore, includes seeking emotional support in an active and productive manner (Priyanka & Kshipra, 2017). The second is avoidant coping strategies which include strategies that focus on emotions and disengagement, thus denying the stressor. Such a strategy may bring short-term relief but, in the long run, it will increase the amount and regularity of the stressor and may lead to problem behaviours (Herres & McCauley Ohannessian, 2015; Priyanka & Kshipra, 2017). When problem-solving focused coping is employed, the individual deals with the situation effectively in a realistic and constructive manner; however, a more emotion-focused approach will produce short-term coping, which temporarily relieves stress but does not address the issue (Papathanasiou et al., 2015).

Females have shown to have higher stress levels than males, although the causes for stress are the same for both genders. It is, furthermore, recognised that the different genders employ different strategies for dealing with problems which may be the reason for differences in coping (Roy et al., 2015). Males tend to react more often than females through aggression, showing lower self-esteem and antisocial behaviour, usually as a result of conflict with the adults in their lives. In contrast, females show stress with regards to academic achievement which seems to manifest itself in signs of depression

(Foto-Özdemir et al., 2016; Latha & Hanumanth, 2006). Males show more aggression in their coping as a result of conflicts in their interpersonal relationships, especially when they do not feel supported. Such behaviour constitutes an avoidant coping strategy. Females are more emotion-focused in their coping, which relieves the stress temporarily but does not address the problem effectively, and this too is an avoidant strategy (Herres & McCauley Ohannessian, 2014; Zhang et al., 2015). Researchers also point out that coping could include a tendency to engage in substance abuse, self-harm, suicide and delinquency among adolescents (Sigfusdottir et al., 2017).

In Namibia, suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people between the ages of 15 and 29 and the fourth highest in Africa (Nembwaya, 2019). One possible explanation could be attributed to the pressure of academic stress according to Glen-Spyron & Jacobs (2019). Education is seen as the only opportunity of getting funding for tertiary education and in turn improving future prospects of attaining a good career and financial security. Glen-Spyron & Jacobs (2019) postulate that many young Namibians experience confusion, worry and stress because of their academic results and especially if they are unable to meet their expected results; they may have suicidal ideations, resort to self-harm or turn to substance abuse in an attempt to cope. It is, therefore, imperative that educators should be able to identify learners who are not coping, as well as develop an understanding of the types of stressors Namibian Secondary School learners face. In this regard, educators should recognise the type of coping strategies employed in order to teach more effective coping strategies to those learners exhibiting ineffective skills. Furthermore, they should be sensitive to the differences between the coping mechanisms of males and females. Current research on the coping responses of adolescents is

available internationally; however, very little is known in Namibia regarding stressors and coping responses among learners.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Adolescents experience several different stressors of physical, cognitive and psychological nature. These include emotional problems, as well as familial, social and academic difficulties. In addition, transitions in life, common during adolescence, further cause imbalance and affect well-being (Mayordomo-Rodríguez et al., 2015). Adolescents need to cope with these stressors effectively in order to avoid problems, such as depression, feelings of dismay, worthlessness and maladaptive behaviour (Zhang et al., 2015). The way that adolescents cope with problems depends on the types of coping strategies that they employ. Ineffective coping strategies are linked with poor adjustment and the internalisation of problems. On the other hand, adolescents also do not only employ one type of coping strategy. Identifying the types and categories of coping strategies employed by adolescents who utilise similar patterns of coping will provide educators with a better understanding of the ways in which they cope and adjust (Herres & McCauley Ohannessian, 2015); however, there seems to be a lack of scientific evidence regarding the types of stress experienced by Namibian learners or the strategies they employ to deal with stressors in their lives.

Furthermore, the differences in coping strategies between the male and female genders in Namibia need to be identified in order to develop specific interventions effective for each gender. The aim of this study is to fill that gap partly.

### **1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The aim of the research was to investigate the types of stressors and ways in which Grade 10 learners in Windhoek manage their stress. The objectives of the study are discussed below.

#### ***1.3.1. IDENTIFICATION OF THE TYPES OF STRESSORS FACED BY GRADE 10 LEARNERS IN WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA***

For the first research objective, the researcher had to identify the type of stressors learners encounter in their daily lives. These were divided into the following categories; home, school, romantic relationships and health.

#### ***1.3.2 IDENTIFICATION OF THE COPING RESPONSES MOST FREQUENTLY EMPLOYED BY GRADE 10 LEARNERS IN WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA TO DEAL WITH LIFE STRESSORS***

Secondly, the research aimed to investigate which coping responses learners are employing when faced with a stressor and whether they employ mostly approach coping or avoidant coping as a method in dealing with problems.

#### ***1.3.3 COMPARISON OF THE COPING RESPONSES BETWEEN GENDERS AMONG GRADE 10 LEARNERS IN WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA***

The third object aimed at establishing whether there was a difference between genders in the type of coping responses utilised by males and females.

### **1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

A study in the Namibian context could provide information regarding the types of stressors faced by learners. Furthermore, if the preferred types of coping strategies employed by learners are identified, educators will gain a better understanding of the way in which to cope with stressors and could, thus, teach approach coping strategies and identify avoidant coping strategies in an educational setting.

The results of this research could lead to further studies in this field and inform schools, parents, Educational Psychologists and other professionals working and counselling learners regarding ways to manage stress more effectively.

### **1.5 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This research was confined to eight selected schools in Windhoek's urban area, and focused on Grade 10 learners. The types of stress urban learners face is different and more chronic as a result of community violence, financial strain, housing evictions, gangs, academic demands, physical abuse and separation from families (Coyle & Vera, 2013), justifying selecting schools in an urban area for this study.

Grade 10 learners were selected as the target population because they were in the middle of their high school years. At this stage learners have matured since starting high school and are possibly beginning to experience more stress than before with regards to family relationships, academics, peer relations and health. This age group would be an ideal time to introduce the teaching of effective coping strategies and thus Grade 10's were the suitable age group to target in this research.

### **1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The Coping Response Inventory (CRI)-Youth Form was developed and standardised as a research instrument for the United States of America but was not necessarily fully applicable in the Namibian context due to cultural differences between the two settings. On the other hand, there is existing evidence that the instrument had been translated and employed in different languages, such as Mandarin, Spanish, Portuguese, Sinhala and Norwegian (Moos, 2004) and applied in studies conducted in other countries. Although it may appear that the instrument is suitable for different cultures, the data relating to the Namibian context which were collected in this study should be interpreted with care.



Another limitation was the vocabulary of the self-report form which was unfamiliar to some participants. A pilot study was conducted in order to iron out any problems in the checklist and the self-report inventory, as well as to practise administering procedures. The vocabulary and interpretation of the questions did, in general, not pose a problem, except in one of the technical schools. The collection of data took much longer there because the researcher had to work through the questions one by one with the learners in order to explain each of them. Although it took a longer time, the pay-off was that accurate data were collected.

The researcher administered the checklist and the CRI-Youth Form herself and was on hand to answer any questions. When a student had difficulty following the administration of the test, the researcher completed the checklist and the Form on a one-on-one basis with the student. This was only necessary in three cases. Although the instrument had been developed in 1993, the researcher found that it was still relevant, reliable and that it captured the required data with ease.

## **1.7 DEFINITION OF TERMS**

This section defines key terms as operationalised in the study.

***Stress:*** The way that the body responds to any demand for change which potentially upsets the balance in an individual; the ability to cope with the stressor is less than the demands of the situation (Roy et al., 2015).

***Perceived stress:*** The extent to which an individual experiences life events as unpredictable, uncontrollable or overloading. It is an important factor that can lead to depressive symptoms or aggravate depression. The more the individual feels he or she is stressed, the more he or she experiences depressive symptoms (Zhang et al., 2015).

***Social support:*** This relates to the individual's perception of the support that they get from family, friends and others. Support comes in different forms, such as resources provided, emotional support and information. Social support assists in diminishing or lessening the negative side-effects of stress, and improves the feeling of being able to cope with stress; this influences the way in which people perceive stress (Zhang et al., 2015).

***Coping strategies:*** These are strategies employed to deal with those problems that cause stress. Problem-solving strategies include planning and attempts to change the stressful environment, whereas emotion-focused strategies is the attempt to minimise the negative emotion by trying out different activities, such as talking to a friend, doing physical activities, like watching TV, eating, shopping, consuming alcohol or gambling (Kim et al., 2014; Papathanaïou et al., 2015).

***Approach coping:*** An individual employs the following strategies to deal with problems: Logical Analysis (LA), Positive Reappraisal (PR), Seeking Guidance (SG) and Support and Problem Solving (PS) (Moos, 2004).

***Avoidant coping:*** An individual employs the following strategies to avoid dealing with problems: Cognitive Avoidant (CA), Acceptance and Resignation (AR), Alternative Rewards (AR) and Emotional Discharge (ED) (Moos, 2004).

***Adolescence:*** The beginning of sexual maturity, also known as puberty, brings about the completion of physical growth (Huli, 2014). It is, furthermore, seen as a time of transition which affects the individual biologically, socially and psychologically, and is

divided into three stages, namely early (11 – 13 years), middle (14 – 16 years) and late adolescence (17 – 19 years) (Roy et al., 2015).

**Anxiety:** Anxiety disorders include characteristics of fear, anxiety and behavioural disorders; fear being an emotional response to both real or perceived threats and anxiety being the expectation of future threat. Although these states are similar, they are also different at the same time in that fear is associated with autonomic arousal needed for fight or flight, whereas anxiety is associated with muscle tension in preparation for anticipated danger (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Further, according to Moran (2015) when one adds up everything that causes stress and subtracts all one's abilities to cope, one is likely to experience anxiety.

**Self-regulation:** Self-regulation is the ability to control emotions and behaviour when in pursuit of a goal. It includes behaviours such as impulsivity, effortful control, cognitive control, emotion regulation, executive functioning, self-control and decision making (King et al., 2018).

**Subjective well-being:** It is the individual's evaluation of life satisfaction and the way in which he or she regularly experiences positive or negative affect. In other words, it is a person's self-perceived life satisfaction, in this case related to the Namibian context, which he or she derives at by means of a process of cognitive appraisal of his or her own life (Coyle & Vera, 2013).

**Stressor:** This can be any factor that causes stress and affects balance (Papathanaïou et al., 2015).

## **1.8 CONCLUSION**

Adolescents experience stress during any developmental stage and, if not addressed, it could lead to behavioural problems. Stress experienced by this age group is related to five stressors, namely school, family, peers, personal health and appearance. To manage stress effectively, the type of coping responses the adolescent employs, plays a crucial role in addressing the source of the stress. Approach coping strategies have been shown as more effective than avoidant strategies which have proven to be unhelpful.

Females appear to show higher levels of stress than males. The main source of their stress is academic related, and it seems that females rely mostly on emotion-focused coping strategies. Males, on the other hand, are more aggressive in their coping, and the main source of their stress seems to result from interpersonal relationships. Namibian adolescents are not exempt from experiencing stress, as can be seen from the rising suicide rate. This study investigated the sources of stress and the type of coping responses employed by Namibian adolescents, as well as determined whether there was a difference in source and coping between males and females.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Adolescence is often referred to as a time of ‘storm and stress’ and is strongly associated with negative affect, which explains increased reports of suicidal ideation and accidental deaths. However, most adolescents emerge from this tumultuous time relatively unscathed (Huli, 2014). On the other hand, these transitions pose developmental challenges both of a physical and cognitive nature (Mayordomo-Rodríguez et al., 2015).

Stress management and coping have become necessary skills which need developing, especially during adolescence. Investigating the types of stress in adolescents and the way they react and cope with problems causing them stress were the foci of this research as it aimed to establish whether adolescents in Windhoek were indeed stressed and what areas of development were causing stress. Furthermore, the coping response of adolescents to stress and the management thereof informed the second part of the investigation.

This chapter addresses the theoretical framework that underlies the study. It also looks at the effects and types of stress, coping responses to stress and gender differences in coping with stress.

#### **2.2 DEFINING STRESS AND STRESSORS**

Stress is a widespread phenomenon experienced by all human beings throughout their lives (Shahsavarani et al., 2015). Selye (1936) defines stress as ‘non-specific responses that can be resulted from a variety of different kinds of stimuli’. For the purpose of this

study, stress is defined as a reaction or stimulus in an individual which has its source in one or more of the following: biological, psychological, developmental, sociocultural and environmental issues. It is a reaction in the sense that it relates to specific changes in the human body, thus being internal. Furthermore, it is the result of a stimulus in the environment and, thus, comes from an external source (Papathanaiou et al., 2015). This definition had relevance to this research in determining the types of stressors learners faced in order to gain a better understanding of their areas of difficulty.

Moyordomo-Rodrigues et al., (2015) are of the opinion that the developmental challenges adolescents face are of an emotional, familial, academic and occupational nature and, although these are sometimes challenging, they contribute to the development of a personal identity necessary in a healthy adult life. When adolescents are unable to cope with stressors which could lead to a distressed state of mind, it might play out in antisocial or self-destructive behaviours (Huli, 2014). Therefore, it is essential for adolescents to manage stress to overcome the detrimental effects of distress and develop healthy stress management skills.

### **2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The present research study was based on two separate theoretical frameworks as it focused on two separate aspects. The first theoretical framework relates to the types of stressors faced by learners, and considers their effect on them.

The second theoretical framework is the Social Learning Theory. It addresses the types of responses to stress that learners have been conditioned to employ.

### **2.3.1 THEORIES RELATED TO TYPES OF STRESSORS**

According to Shahsavarani and associates (2015), a unidimensional perspective can neither represent the factual reality of stress nor provide a suitable solution to stressful situations. Therefore, it is essential to have a suitable theoretical framework in which this study is grounded.

It is worth examining theories that explain the origin of stress to develop the understanding of ways in which adolescents acquire stress. Three models relating to the origin of stress include the Stimulus-based Model by Holmes and Rahe (1967), Response-based Model by Selye (1936) and Transaction-based Model by Lazarus and Folkman (1987).

The first model by Holmes and Rahe (1967) explains that stress is a stimulus which comes in the form of a life event or a group of circumstances which will result in normal psychological reactions. Holmes and Rahe identify forty-three events or lifestyle changes, for example divorce, that are usually perceived by individuals as stressful. This model confirms that stress can be triggered by certain life events. By establishing which life events cause adolescents to stress, we are better able to identify these events and teach adolescents to prepare for them by employing adequate coping strategies (Papathanaiou et al., 2015).

The second model, Selye's Response-based Model (1936), examines stress from a more biological perspective. General Adaption Syndrome (GAS) describes stress as states of the body and the changes that happen within. Hormones cause changes in structure and chemical composition; consequently, the whole body reacts and adapts to these changes.

Selye suggests that there is a pattern in the way that people react to stressors, and that all people react in the same way whether it is a significant stressor or not.

This three-phased process includes the alarm phase, also known as the mobilisation phase, the resistance phase and the exhaustion phase. In short, the stressor is recognised and the body reacts to the alarm by releasing hormones that help to mobilise against the stressor. Such coping mechanisms could be suppressed over time and eventually lead to exhaustion. Consequently, the negative effects of stress manifest physically and signs of stress become evident (Grieve et al., 2009). Sometimes adolescents are not even aware of the fact that they are experiencing stress until it begins to manifest itself physically (Papathanaiou et al., 2015). It is worthwhile to recognise the physical signs of stress and be able to identify them.

The Cognitive-Transactional Model of stress developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1987) defines stress as a dynamic relationship between the individual and the environment where a stimulus, usually a negative one, disrupts an individual's homeostasis; therefore, the individual reacts to the negative stimulus with whatever means available. The more means the individual has available, the more effectively he or she will be able to deal with the stimulus; in contrast, the fewer means available, the greater the likelihood will be that the individual will deal with the stimulus ineffectively. Lazarus also postulates that as children mature stress increases, and this is especially true for the higher Grades at schools (Acosta-Gómez et al., 2018). Another relevant aspect that Lazarus proposes is the way in which people interpret stress, either as a stimulus or a response, a threat or a challenge.



Lazarus (1999) bases his model of stress and coping on the reciprocal interaction between the person and the environment, and postulates that it is why some people manage stress better than others. He hypothesises that individuals differ in sensitivity and vulnerability. Furthermore, he focuses his work on the cognitive processes that mediate between stimulus and response, as well as examines the factors affecting these processes. Consequently, there is a link between the individual, the environment, the cognitive evaluation of the environmental demands and the stimulus response options. Daily stressors are evaluated as irrelevant, very stressful or positive and, against this background, as manageable or unmanageable. During the evaluation the individual identifies available resources or options as he or she continuously redefines the problem solving process. This process is individual and intrinsic, and the outcomes are dependent on the person's motivation, characteristics, beliefs, cognitive resources and skills (Moyordomo-Rodrigues et al., 2015; Papathanaïou et al., 2015). Thus we need to teach learners to recognise the resources that are available to them in order to develop skills, as well as resources that are not readily available. They, furthermore, need to become familiar with problem solving processes as stress increases in the higher Grades (Acosta-Gómez et al., 2018).

Coyle and Vera (2013) outline three further models related to stress. The first is the Stress-exposure Model which postulates that stress causes maladaptive behaviour and emotions. It implies that, in an environmental context, stress may lead to depression and antisocial behaviour. The second is the Stress-generation Model which proposes that stressful events are a result of maladaptive behaviour; for example, a person could develop interpersonal conflict as a result of a depressive mood which, in turn, will result

in a stressful life event. According to the third model, the Reciprocal-stress Model, which integrates the previous two models, a stressful event both predicts and results from maladaptive emotions and behaviour; for example, the death of a family member may result in depression and, thus, could potentially damage relations with others. It becomes clear that one must also consider the role of the individual in stress management as all actions carry consequences which can be either positive or negative.

For the purpose of this study, understanding the origins of stress in adolescents, whether it is as a result of life events, physiological reactions, reaction to the environment or exposure to stress, assisted in defining the parameters with regards to the stress they experience. Such understanding will enable educators to identify the specific areas that cause distress in order to negotiate effective remediation and, thus, prepare adolescents better for adult life.

### ***2.3.2 THEORIES RELATED TO RESPONSES TO STRESS***

Alfred Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1971) developed from behaviourism, and is based on learning by direct experience through observation, imitation and modelling. The assumption is that individuals learn from interactions with others in a social context. They observe their model's behaviour, assimilate it and imitate that behaviour, especially if the imitated behaviour is reinforced with positive rewards, thus indicating attention, memory and motivation. This notion has relevance to the research as coping strategies employed to solve problems and stressors are learned from significant others by observing them and imitating the way they solve their problems. This is not to say that the problem solving strategies learnt in the environment are always effective but individuals are able to identify ineffective strategies and learn more effective strategies.

New behaviours are not only learned through external sources but also through intrinsic motivation. If intrinsic motivation, which is cognitive in nature, brings rewards, such as pride, satisfaction or a sense of accomplishment, the behaviour will be reinforced (Nabavi, 2012). The type of coping responses an individual selects can be influenced by his or her motivation and expectation of the way that things should turn out. These are behaviours that can be taught to adolescents.

## **2.4 THE EFFECTS OF STRESS**

Examining the effects of stress on adolescents has significance as it highlights the need to equip the youth adequately with those effective strategies necessary to prevent uncontrollable stress, and teach them to function effectively in a demanding world. The effects of stress can manifest physiologically, as mental health problems, academically and within the social environment.

Firstly, we learn that occasional stress is not physiologically harmful or life threatening; however, if an individual lacks adequate coping responses, it may have harmful effects in the long run because it may result in physical ‘wear and tear’ on the hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal axis, which can result in poor physical and mental health (Sigfusdottir et al., 2017).

Mental health problems are linked to the outcome of stressful events (Zimmer-Gembeck & Skinner, 2010). Zimmer-Gembeck and Skinner (2010) propose that stress manifests itself on two levels, namely internally, where the individual experiences depression and anxiety or externally, where the individual acts out aggressively or by means of antisocial acts. Other symptoms, as a result of stress, include poor interpersonal relationships and sleeplessness. Furthermore, when working with adolescents, one

should not always point out only the negatives, such as mistakes, setbacks and failure, but rather teach adolescents that failure can lead to discovery, learning and building resources for future coping, as well as emphasise that positive or negative outcomes are dependent on the way an individual responds to them.

In addition, stress, especially uncontrollable stress, interferes with functioning because it induces fear, anxiety and avoidant behaviour. The two most common anxiety disorders that manifest themselves as a result of stress are Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) and Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD). Panic disorders and specific phobias can also manifest themselves in times of stress (Moran, 2015). Social Anxiety Disorder has been strongly linked to Alcohol-use Disorder (AUD) which, in turn, leads to further negative consequences, such as neurological damage, sexual risk-taking, violence and increased mortality rates. Furthermore, adolescent drinking leads to heavy alcohol consumption in adulthood. In the context of social stress, an adolescent with SAD tends to use alcohol in an effort to manage negative affect and, thus, learns to rely on avoidant coping strategies (Blumenthal et al., 2016).

Another negative effect of stress is academic stress, especially in societies that value education highly and that place high expectations on their youth to perform. Academic stress has been linked to health concerns because it results in adolescents employing maladaptive behaviour, such as smoking, consuming alcohol, mental health issues and suicidal ideation (Park & Kim, 2018), in order to cope.

Other research studies have produced similar results proving that uncontrollable stress produces negative effects, such as exhaustion, guilt, depressive moods, dissatisfaction, a developed sense of failure and irritability. Coupled with these, adolescents experiencing

higher levels of stress seem to experience dissatisfaction with regards to perceived social support from family, friends and others and, therefore, develop depressive symptoms (Zhang et al., 2015). Research by Papathanaiou et al.'s (2015) supports this view and, furthermore, adds that the exhaustion and poor health that adolescents experience as a result of stress are due to ineffective coping and the use of defence mechanisms that also affect interpersonal relationships and cause problems at school, as well as an inability to address essential needs.

The aforementioned research, further, posits that stress should not be viewed in isolation but rather as part of a causal chain that begins with social conditions and ends with psychological distress, such as poverty, family conflict and abuse. Social structure strengthens the previous point. At a micro level, one experiences stress related to interpersonal relationships and, at a macro level, stress may result from economic and social pressure, examples of which are poverty, unemployment and conflict, among groups. However, this research focused mainly on interpersonal levels although it is worth keeping social issues in mind as well.

Stress, furthermore, typically leads to delinquency in the form of substance abuse, self-harm and illicit drug use, that begins in adolescence and may lead one in ten adolescents to addiction, which can be the gateway to negative behaviours, such as stealing, vandalism and violence. Other behaviours that could stem from excessive stress are depressed moods, school drop-out and suicidal ideation. Adolescent suicides have increased by 40% over the last forty years. The increase in suicide rates has been attributed to major stress and adverse circumstances (Sigfusdottir et al., 2017).

## **2.5 TYPES OF STRESS**

The previous section outlined the negative effects of stress on adolescents and the possible long-term consequences of prolonged stress. Stress usually originates from problems encountered in people's daily lives, the way they perceive a problem and the manner in which they handle that problem.

The next section discusses the types of stressors encountered by adolescents which might be the origin of their stress. Research Objective One looks at the types of stressors and employed a checklist in which the indicators were determined from the articles reviewed in this section of the literature review.

Life stressors that affect adolescents can be classified into two general groups, one being major events and the other common hassles. A major stressor would include death in the family, divorce, traumatic events or natural disasters, whereas common stressors would include school-related problems, such as bullying or time management. Interpersonal relationships, including conflict with parents, siblings or peers, would also fall under common stressors. Adolescents particularly find social interactions, as well as periods of transition from school to tertiary education or entering the workforce, stressful (Zimmer-Gembeck & Skinner, 2010). This research, furthermore, leaned on research by Roy et al. (2015) who conclude that, in adolescent stress, common hassles can be classified under five broad categories, namely school, family, peers, personal health and appearance. Next, each of these categories will be examined and their contribution to adolescent stress considered.

### **2.5.1 SCHOOL STRESS**

Education is highly valued in most countries and cultures as it develops knowledge, skills and strategies to ensure better opportunities in life. In some cultures, parents,

teachers and learners themselves place high expectations on the learner to excel academically, and this could be a major contributor to academic stress levels, especially when parents invest in their children's achievements through excessive personal and financial investment (Roy et al., 2015). In addition, society is based on a win-lose model which adds pressure on both parents and learners to remain competitive in order to keep up with society (Moran, 2015; Park & Kim, 2018). The lines between supporting a learner academically and combining realistic expectations with social support systems as opposed to having excessive expectations and engaging in over-involvement can become blurred. Social support influences the way in which an individual perceives stress (Acosta-Gómez et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2015).

It is worth to note that academic tasks, such as homework, giving presentations, competition with classmates, academic overload and, most significantly, exams, are the major contributors to adolescent stress (Acosta-Gómez et al., 2018; Kaushal et al., 2018). Kaushal et al. (2018), furthermore, include parental and peer pressure as a source of school stress; however, they have found that learners mostly put pressure on themselves to perform.

### ***2.5.2 FAMILY AND PEER RELATIONSHIPS***

One aspect that could contribute to the development of stress in a family can be attributed to the developing adolescent who has to adapt to change, for example beginning a new school term or school year and a changing body image (Acosta-Gómez et al., 2018). Similar factors that contribute to adolescents' vulnerability to stress include rapid physical and psychological changes, their exposure to schoolwork, peer relationships, mood swings and their environment (Huli, 2014). However, another perspective which is not directly under the adolescent's control is familial factors, such

as socio-economic status, a chaotic environment, divorce, separation, losing a parent or when a family member struggles with psychological or physical problems (Foto-Özdemir et al., 2016).

Although the socio-economic status (SES) of the family is not the main focus of this research, it does have relevance to some degree or other. Firstly, it has an influence on the type of school that the learner is able to attend and the resources that are available, as well as the financial conditions and facilities that are available and provided by the parents. Many parents in developing countries are focused on making ends meet as they concentrate on making money and providing for their families. These families often only have access to ineffective schooling for their children (Roy et al., 2015). Moreover, parents who feel overloaded and are showing strain, may not have effective coping strategies themselves and they could withdraw, leaving the learner with fewer positive adjustments to cope with the stress (Huli, 2014). In spite of this, it was also found that healthy home relationships superseded financial difficulties and overcame these problems (Roy et al., 2015).

Typically during puberty, adolescents become more self-conscious and are easily affected by the opinions of others, especially those of friends, romantic partners and the perspectives of teachers. They, thus, become more independent and begin to isolate themselves from parental control. They start making their own decisions and become responsible for their emotions and actions. They are determined to sustain their social position with peers, and this may be a contributing factor to stress (Bhargava & Trivedi, 2018; Latha & Hanumanth, 2006; Roy et al., 2015).

The need for adolescents to sustain their social position with regards to peers stems from a need for affiliation and also includes the pressure of social evaluation (King et al.,



2018). These affiliations with peers can be either negative (including rejection or victimization) or positive (social support and acceptance) and may contribute to the manner in which the adolescent manages emotions. The degree to which the adolescent regulates emotions will predict adaptive behaviour in a social context resulting in either successful or unsuccessful outcomes. The higher the degree of self-regulation across academic and social domains, the better the social and academic function, whereas in contrast lower self-regulation may be associated in risky behaviour (King et al., 2018). Negative outcomes may increase levels of stress.

Striving for independence and moving away from the shelter of the family may spark some challenges of their own and may contribute to the development of problems and stress. As adolescents begin spending more time out of the home, they begin to demand more freedom, which may contribute to testing their parents' limits as they become more resistant, and trying to find alternatives to their parents' rules (Huli, 2014; Zhang et al., 2015). Furthermore, adolescents will seek support and refuge with their peers, especially when they experience conflict at home. This opens up a whole new world of problems and potential pitfalls as they navigate substance abuse, the instant gratification from social media, lack of competence, risk behaviour and cyber bullying, all the while being exposed to hierarchies in groups which can either work out well or not. Stress can either cause havoc or yield better results. It depends on the type of coping strategies employed, particularly with regard to self-regulation in the form of immediate gratification versus delayed rewards which could result in maladaptive emotion expression including rumination (Acosta-Gómez et al., 2018; King et al., 2018; Moyordomo-Rodrigues et al., 2015; Park & Kim, 2018).

### **2.5.3 HEALTH AND APPEARANCE**

Adolescents like to spend more time with their peers, and are conscious of the way they behave and look. The view they have of themselves and their body image has been related to suicidal ideation in Korean adolescents (Kim et al., 2014). Body image is the way people view and feel about their bodies. In modern society there is an increasing sense of what the perfect body should be like. A study conducted in India (Ganesan et al., 2018) determined that dissatisfaction related to body image, especially among girls, was as high as 77.6%. Three factors influenced such behaviour, namely Higher Body Mass Index (BMI), sociocultural pressure to look a certain way and depression. This study confirms that body image is no longer only prevalent in western societies but has crept into non-western societies. The present study included body image and health in the research instrument to determine whether Grade 10 learners found perceptions regarding body image stressful.

### **2.6 COPING RESPONSES TO STRESS**

Stress has, is and always will form, a part of life during the adolescent years and beyond. The implication is that people need to learn ways in which to manage stressors in order to manage stress. People respond to the stressor by means of the type of strategies, either approach or avoidant, that they employ, and this will determine how successfully they can manage stress as a result of stressors.

Research conducted by Moos (1993) was based on two theoretical approaches to classify coping responses employed to manage stressors in life. The first approach highlights the focus of coping, whether it is problem- or emotion-focused. The second approach focuses on the method of coping with stressors, namely cognitive or behavioural. In short, approach coping is problem-focused and incorporates cognitive and behavioural

attempts to resolve the stressor. In contrast, avoidant coping is emotion-focused and includes cognitive and behavioural efforts to avoid thinking about a stressor and its effects, or attempts to manage the affect related to it (Moos, 1993).

Papathanaïou et al. (2015) posit that coping responses can be either problem- or emotion-focused. A problem-focused approach, on a cognitive level, would include responses such as logical analysis and positive reappraisal; on a behavioural level, it would include seeking guidance and problem solving (Moos, 1993). Papathanaïou et al. (2015) report that problem-focused coping was more realistic and constructive in the long-term, whereas emotion-focused coping may temporarily reduce stress to a tolerable level and help the individual to feel better, but ultimately it does not address the issue. According to Moos (1993), emotion-focused, also known as avoidant strategies, would include cognitive avoidant as well as acceptance and resignation on a cognitive level; it, furthermore, includes the seeking of alternative rewards and emotional discharge on a behavioural level. Kim et al. (2014) concur that problem solving is a better method and that it shows evidence of less depression when compared to emotion-focused coping in the form of distraction which leads to increased feelings of depression as the actual stressor has not been addressed. However, it is interesting to note that Moyordomo-Rodrigues et al. (2015) found that a particular type of behaviour could be classified as either a problem- or an emotion-focused strategy, depending on the reason for selecting that behaviour. For example, seeking support with the intent of obtaining emotional support and reassurance would be considered an emotion-focused strategy, which is soothing in the short-term. In contrast, an individual could also seek support in the form of help or advice, which is practical in nature and attempts to find a solution to the

problem and, therefore, is considered a problem-solving, focused strategy which is different from seeking emotional support (Moyordomo-Rodrigues et al., 2015; Park & Kim, 2018).

Another aspect to consider when examining the focus of coping is the manner in which an individual appraises or reacts to a stressor as this predicts whether he or she will choose either an approach or avoidant coping strategy. The focal aim in reacting to a stressor would be to minimise negative emotions in order to reduce distress and allow clear analysis of the problem (Malin et al., 2019). For every objective stressor that an individual faces, he or she will make a subjective appraisal of the impact of that stressor on him or her, and see it as either a threat or a challenge to his or her well-being. When the individual appraises the stressor as a threat, he or she may experience fear, employ escape-focused strategies, withdraw or seek emotional support. The individual could ultimately feel that he or she has less control over the stressor. When, on the other hand, the individual appraises the stressor as a challenge, he or she will show interest in the problem and, therefore, attempt to solve it, thus taking control of the problem. The more an individual has control over a problem, the more he or she will employ active strategies, show persistence in solving the problem and exert him- or herself in the process of solving the problem. This results in diminishing distress (Moyordomo-Rodrigues et al., 2015; Zimmer-Gembeck & Skinner, 2010).

The method of coping can be either cognitive or behavioural in nature (Moos, 1993). The way people think about a stressor will determine the way they react to it. When people think positively about a stressor they will employ a more problem-focused approach whereas when they think negatively about a stressor, they are more likely to

rely on an emotion-focused strategy. This has implications since, when faced with a negative stressor, people take personal responsibility for the way they think about it. When they think negatively about the stressor, it will prevent them from changing the way they think about it, rather than trying to find a solution. The individual may resort to self-criticism and see him- or herself as unable to find a solution. Furthermore, when people suppress their feelings and avoid further examination of the stressor or simply ruminate about it, they deny themselves the possibility of finding a solution, which may lead to poor adjustment and more depressive symptoms, anxiety, behavioural problems and poorer performance (Malin et al., 2019; Moyordomo-Rodrigues et al., 2015).

This brings in the aspect of positive reframing, which is another cognitive approach, and a sense of purpose. Both of these will facilitate a more positive slant to the outcome of a stressor as thinking influences behaviour, which influences outcome (Esia-Donkoh & Yelkpieri, 2011; Malin et al., 2019). A person with a healthy, mental outlook is one who acts in accordance with personal values, beliefs, goals and social roles; consequently, when people face stressors they will have healthier outcomes. They may employ positive reframing (increasing positive emotions during adversity) as an approach to dealing with a problem. It was also found that altruism, feeling socially connected and helping others, relieved distress by improving mood, increasing self-efficacy, promoting social integration and giving life a sense of meaning (Malin et al., 2019).

Approach coping is problem-focused and utilises cognitive and behavioural attempts to resolve a stressor, as opposed to avoidant coping, which is emotion-focused and utilises cognitive and behavioural attempts to avoid thinking about the stressor (Moos, 1993). To cushion the effects of stress, an individual should increase employing approach coping

through cognitive and behavioural strategies by engaging actively with the stressor. He or she, thus, engages actively with the stressor by utilising cognitive restructuring, problem solving and seeking understanding (Moyordomo-Rodrigues et al., 2015). When individuals employ avoidant coping strategies, they perceive a stressor as uncontrollable and react emotionally to it; they seldom address the stressor and develop feelings of hopelessness and meaninglessness which may lead to depressive symptoms, resulting in maladaptive behaviour, such as substance abuse. On the other hand, a more active approach to stressors will bring about the opposite effect and establish positive feelings and the ability to cope with the stressor (Coyle & Vera, 2013). Research indicates that approach coping promotes well-being and avoidant coping causes maladaptive behaviour and depressive symptoms (Herres & McCauley Ohannessian, 2014; Kim et al., 2014; Moyordomo-Rodrigues et al., 2015).

Foto-Özdemir et al. (2016) confirm that adolescents with psychiatric disorders rely more on avoidant coping strategies which are emotion focused. In this regard, males were more aggressive in their coping by ‘turning against object’ and the females by ‘turning against self’; both are emotion-focused responses. Adolescents who are unable to employ approach coping strategies can develop suicidal ideation when faced with stressful life events because they are unable to deal with stress in an effective manner. There is a distinct difference in the success of employing problem-focused strategies and employing emotion-focused avoidant strategies (Huli, 2014; Herres & McCauley Ohannessian, 2014; Zhang et al., 2015).

Ultimately, the type of coping response that an individual selects is determined only by that individual. Their choice is influenced by factors, such as the way they perceive or

appraise the problem, internalise it and consider the end goal. Typically adolescents employ a range of both approach and avoidant responses; however, they tend to rely more heavily on avoidant responses in the form of recreation activities which are not problem-focused. Therefore, problem solving strategies need to be taught to adolescents so that they will be able to cope more effectively (Acosta-Gómez et al., 2018; Herres & McCauley Ohannessian, 2014; Priyanka & Kshipra, 2017).

## **2.7 GENDER DIFFERENCES**

The third research objective in this study examined whether there were differences between the genders in the types of stressors, as well as coping responses, utilised. Females experience higher stress levels than males, although both genders experience the same kinds of stressors (Kaushal et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2014; Zimmer-Gembeck & Skinner, 2010). Similarly, research indicates that females have different coping responses to stressors than males (Herres & McCauley Ohannessian, 2014; Foto-Özdemir et al., 2016; Roy et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2015). The type of coping responses to stressors predicts how successfully or unsuccessfully adolescents cope and manage stress (Kaushal et al., 2018; Roy et al., 2015). Closer examination of differences in coping between males and females may determine why females experience stress more frequently than males. Zimmer-Gembeck and Skinner (2010) illustrate the difference in gender responses to stress with regards to three aspects, rumination and distraction, social support and self-reliance and emotional response to stress.

Firstly, females will ruminate more frequently than males by focusing on the negative and experiencing anxiety. Rumination is a negative strategy and affects mental stability; it may lead to depressive symptoms because of the direct focus on the problem and may

exacerbate negative feelings. Males, on the other hand, rely more on distraction through physical activity, which is an avoidant strategy (Foto-Özdemir et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2014; Zimmer-Gembeck & Skinner, 2010). Males tend to turn to physical activities, such as drinking alcohol, taking drugs and smoking, engaging in sports, playing online games and reading, in order to manage stress. Although these strategies include action, they are not addressing the stressor and, therefore, they would be categorised as avoidant strategies. On the other hand, females resort to emotional distraction strategies, such as seeking support and venting, eating, listening to music, sleeping, watching TV, singing and online chatting which, as with males, are action-focused but not addressing the stressor, therefore, avoidant in nature (Kim et al., 2014).

Secondly, females rely on social support which can be encouraging but also maladaptive if the groups are co-ruminating. Males again, employ direct problem solving, thus relying on themselves, or else they employ avoidance and disengagement (Herres & McCauley Ohannessian, 2014; Kim et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2015; Zimmer-Gembeck & Skinner, 2010). Herres and McCauley Ohannessian (2014) add that females will utilise approach coping strategies more frequently than males since females may make use of social support and may find refuge in religious coping, whereas males are slow to disclose their feelings. A possible explanation for this is that females place a higher importance on interpersonal relationships when compared to males and have that extra social support which helps them to cope better with life stressors. The support of friends seems to lessen the effects of perceived stress (Kim et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2015).



Thirdly, emotional responses to stress shown by females include sadness and fear, often as a result of their physical appearance, body dissatisfaction, interpersonal relationships, school problems, sexual harassment and abuse. Females show a higher tendency towards depression and suicidal ideation as a result of the perception of sadness and hopelessness (Foto-Özdemir et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2014). Males tend to be more competitive, distrustful, irrational and hostile, making them more vulnerable to emotional problems because of internal interpersonal conflicts resulting in feeling less supported, and they may have lower self-esteem (Foto-Özdemir et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2015; Zimmer-Gembeck & Skinner, 2010). This relates to adolescents because habits that are established during adolescent times may carry through into adulthood.

## **2.8 CONCLUSION**

Overall, the literature review has yielded consistent results among the different research studies on the topic of causes of adolescent stress and the type of coping responses. The most notable contributor of stress to adolescents appears to be academics, more so examination stress.

This study determined whether Namibian learners experienced the same sources of stress, and whether they experienced high or moderate stress levels in these areas. Secondly, it is clear that adolescents employed both types of coping but may rely more frequently on avoidant coping. Determining the types of coping employed by Namibian learners will allow future research either to address or reinforce types of coping. Finally, girls are more emotion-based and seek social support in their coping, whereas boys are more action-focused and are more easily distracted from the actual source of the

problem. When determining the differences in sources of stress and coping between genders in Namibia, they can be addressed in future studies and curriculum planning.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN**

This research aimed to gather more information about the stressors to which adolescents are subjected, as well as the coping responses they apply in dealing with these stressors.

The research also aimed to establish whether there was a difference in the type of stressors and coping mechanisms between the different genders.

To reach these aims a quantitative research approach using a survey design was employed. A simple descriptive approach was considered as a suitable design for this research because it utilized a one-shot survey with the purpose of describing sources of stress, coping responses and gender differences of Grade 10 learners at a specific point in time using a standardised, self-report inventory (see Appendix G) and a checklist (see Appendix F) (Mertens, 2015).

#### **3.2 POPULATION**

The target population that formed the focus of this study was all Grade 10 learners attending schools in Windhoek, Namibia. According to the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture's fifteenth school day report (2019), there were 73 high schools in the Windhoek region, with 4452 Grade 10 learners of whom 2039 were male learners and 2413 female learners.

#### **3.3 SAMPLE**

The sample comprised 300 learners selected by means of random sampling methods. The researcher acquired a list of names of all the high schools in the Windhoek region

from the Ministry of Education. These names were written on cards and put in a hat from which the names of eight schools were randomly selected.

The range of schools included both private and government schools. Not all eight that were initially selected were available for data gathering; consequently, the researcher continued picking names from the hat until the quota had been reached. The final sample was selected from completed and signed consent forms (see Appendices D and E).

### **3.4 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS**

The instrument employed to address the first research objective regarding the types of stressors faced by learners was a checklist developed by the researcher (see Appendix F). The selected categories for the checklist were based on the literature review. The main headings included school, family, romantic relationships and health. Each main heading had subheadings that included nineteen possible stressors. The checklist contained an accompanying Likert scale which was labelled: 1 (No stress at all); 2 (Caused stress once or twice); 3 (Yes, causes stress sometimes); 4 (Yes, causes stress fairly often). The Likert scale was employed to identify to what degree the learners perceived the item as stressful or not.

The coping methods employed by Grade 10 learners were identified by administering The Coping Response Inventory – Youth Form (CRI-Youth), which is a self-report inventory that can be administered to youths from the ages 12 to 18 years (see Appendix G). The CRI-Youth measures eight different types of coping responses to life stressors. The responses were measured by employing eight scales, four of which measure approach coping and four avoidant coping. In each measure the first two scales reflected cognitive coping strategies and the second two reflected behaviour coping strategies.

Cognitive approach coping responses include Logical Analysis, which comprises efforts to comprehend and prepare mentally for a stressor and its consequences, and Positive Reappraisal, which indicates attempts at interpreting and reorganising a problem in order to view it in a positive light while still accepting the reality of the situation.

On a behavioural level, approach coping included Seeking Guidance and Support, reflecting when the individual sought information, guidance and support, and Problem Solving reflecting action taken in order to solve the problem.

Conversely, on a cognitive level, avoidant responses included Cognitive Avoidant, where an individual will avoid thinking of the problem and Acceptance and Resignation, which means that the individual responds to the problem by merely accepting it.

Lastly, behavioural avoidant responses included Seeking Alternative Rewards where the individual becomes involved in substitute activities to find satisfaction, and Emotional Discharge to reduce tension by expressing negative feelings.

The CRI-Youth Form consisted of two parts. Part 1 required the learners to describe the most important problem they had experienced in the past twelve months. This was followed by ten questions which related to the way in which they viewed the problem, for example, as a threat or challenge, and whether or not they expected the problem to occur.

Part 2 of the CRI-Youth Form related to the same problem the learner had described in Part 1, and consisted of 48 questions relating to the way they had dealt with the problem set out in 8 columns for the marking of the responses. The 8 columns indicated the approach and avoidant approaches as outlined above. The learners indicated their responses on a Likert scale comprising the following indicators: 0 (No, not at all); 1 (Yes, once or twice); 2 (Yes, sometimes); 3 (Yes, fairly often) (see Appendix H). The

values for each column were added to obtain raw scores. The raw scores ranged from 0 – 18, and those responses of participants with the same raw scores were added together and converted to averages. These were raw scores/percentages of frequencies which were converted into t-scores for each column. The CRI-Youth form converted the raw score to a t-score and was interpreted by means of t-score range and descriptions. The t-score had a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10. By means of the criteria for interpreting the CRI-Youth scores, those scores of 66 and above in the t-score range were regarded as considerably above average, whereas t-scores in the 60 to 65 range were considered to be well above average. The scores that lay between 55 and 59 were regarded as somewhat above average, 46 and 54 as average, 41 and 45 is somewhat below average, 35 and 40 as well below average; t-scores that fell below 34, or considerably below, were regarded as average.

In the technical report of the CRI-Youth Scales, the internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) was reported as 0.68 or higher on all eight scales except for Acceptance and Resignation where it was given as 0.55. This is considered moderate reliability (Moos, 1993).

### **3.5 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY**

In order to ensure reliability and validity, three pilot studies were conducted. Initially, respondents were required only to tick the stressors that were applicable to themselves and rate the level of stress it caused them. This was too confusing; consequently, in the second pilot study the form was changed so that respondents had to tick a response on every item, and the indicators were changed to *no stress at all* on one end of the Likert scale and *causing stress fairly often* on the other end of the scale.

In the third pilot study, the word *infidelity* was changed to *cheating* and *body image* was changed to *the way I look*, as this was more understandable to the learners. The third pilot study went smoothly and participants understood and managed the CRI-Youth Form with ease.

There were five stages of development when compiling the CRI-Youth Form (Moos, 1993):

1. Identifying coping domains and the development of an initial item pool.
2. Constructing a preliminary Inventory.
3. Revising the Inventory which was based on pilot interviews.
4. The first wave of the field trial was conducted on 315 youths including healthy, depressed youths and youths with conduct disorders.
5. The second wave of field trial was conducted on 254 of the initial 315 youths in the first wave, in a 12 to 15 month follow up.

In the technical report of the CRI-Youth Scales, the internal consistency (*Cronbach's alpha*) was reported as 0.68 or higher on all eight scales except for Acceptance and Resignation where it was 0.55. These scores are considered of moderate reliability (Moos, 1993).

### **3.6 PROCEDURE**

In order to determine the types of stressors faced by Grade 10 learners, the participants ticked the types of stressors most commonly experienced on a checklist. The checklist was rated by means of a Likert scale. The checklist was compiled by including the typical stressors experienced by adolescents based on the literature reviewed (see Appendix F).

The CRI-Youth self-report inventory was administered in accordance with procedures outlined in the *CRI-Youth Professional Manual*. During the pilot study, any words not understood had been identified and clarified to the participants before they answered the questions. The pilot study was conducted to determine the reliability and validity of this instrument.

### **3.7 DATA ANALYSIS**

To analyse the types of stressors faced by adolescents, frequencies were determined for each response on the checklist as recorded on the Likert scale for all three hundred participants, boys and girls separately. Percentages for each were calculated by means of the SPSS computer programme.

The CRI-Youth Form, which determined the type of coping response employed, was scored according to instructions in the manual. The raw scores indicating the frequency for all three hundred learners were recorded on an Excel spreadsheet. The results for boys and girls which were recorded separately. Raw scores were converted into t-scores and percentiles in each of the eight coping responses. The averages for each score in each measure were calculated to determine the frequency of the types of coping responses employed by the three hundred participants.

To determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between genders, scores for boys and girls were recorded separately and calculated by means of a two-sample t-test employed for comparison.

### **3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The researcher applied for approval from the University of Namibia's Human Research Ethics Committee in order to conduct the proposed research study in partial fulfilment of the Master's in Educational Psychology degree. The ethical approval number is



FE/PGSC/19/03/05 and the certificate is attached in Annex A. Following this, approval was sought from the Ministry of Education's Permanent Secretary to conduct research in Windhoek high schools (See Annex B). Subsequently, permission was sought and granted by the Regional Director of Education in Namibia (See Annex C).

The researcher made contact with the selected schools and went personally to introduce herself, hand out the parent consent forms and explain the research to the principal and learners. It was emphasised that participation was voluntary and that confidentiality would be respected, as well as that participants had the right to withdraw at any time without any consequences. The researcher returned to the research sites on designated days and times. Learners who had brought their parent consent forms (Annex D) were invited to participate.

The first part of the data collection was spent on the learner assent forms (Annex E) and then the research was conducted. The researcher was on hand to answer any questions. All steps were taken to ensure that the participants came to no harm, whether socially or emotionally, as a result of answering the questionnaire at any stage of the process. The researcher ensured that each participant had sufficient space to ensure privacy when filling in the CRI-Youth Form even though all participants were together in the same venue.

The questionnaires will be stored in a secure, locked box in a safe. Once the data from the questionnaires have been processed, they will be locked away until the research has been finalised and accepted. The data will then be shredded and disposed.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESULTS**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The total sample size for this study comprised 300 Grade 10 learners, of whom 153 were males and 147 females, from eight schools in Windhoek. The data collected from these participants will be presented below.

The analysis and discussion first focus on the types of stressors as experienced by the total sample, males and females combined. This is followed by the analysis and discussion of the results derived from the completed CRI-Youth forms and, finally, gender differences regarding the stressors experienced are presented.

#### **4.2 TYPES OF STRESSORS**

The results for the types of stressors as expressed by the participants are presented in percentages that were calculated from frequencies for each of the types of stressors on the checklist developed by the researcher. The different categories were obtained from the literature reviewed, and consisted of the following main headings: school, family, romantic relationships and health. Each main heading had subheadings which included different possible stressors. The checklist had an accompanying four point Likert scale with labels: 1 (No stress at all); 2 (Caused stress once or twice); 3 (Yes, causes stress sometimes); 4 (Yes, causes stress fairly often). The Likert scale was employed to identify to what degree the learners perceived the item as stressful or not.

Table 1 presents results, with stressors ranked from causing the most to the least stress, based on the mean score of point values 3 and 4.

**Table 1***Types of stressors experienced by Grade 10 learners in Windhoek, Namibia*

Type of stressor	fairly often %	sometimes %	Mean of point value 4 & 3	once or twice %	Not at all %	Mean of point value 1 & 2
			Point	Value		
<u>Point value</u>						
	4	3		2	1	
Exam stress	36.7	32.7	69.4	20.0	10.6	30.6
Academic difficulties	24.3	30.0	54.3	33.0	12.7	45.7
The way I look	15.0	16.7	31.7	25.3	43.0	68.3
Relationship with father	12.3	15.3	27.6	32.3	40.1	72.4
Break up in romantic relationship	10.3	9.0	19.3	24.7	56.0	80.7
Relationship with siblings	10.0	18.3	28.3	28.7	43.0	71.7
Moving to a different school	9.0	13.0	22.0	18.7	59.3	78.0
Conflict (arguing and fighting)	7.7	12.3	20.0	24.0	56.0	80.0
Ill health	7.7	12.0	19.7	31.0	49.3	80.3
Cheating in romantic relationships	7.7	7.3	15.0	17.3	67.7	85.0
Relationship with mother	7.0	18.7	25.7	29.0	45.3	74.3
Social relationship with peers	6.7	21.7	28.4	36.6	35.0	71.6
Problems with teachers	6.7	19.3	26.0	34.7	39.3	74.0
Jealousy in romantic relationships	4.7	8.3	13.0	30.3	56.7	87.0
Parental unemployment	4.7	7.7	12.4	16.6	71.0	87.6
Parental divorce	4.7	5.3	10.0	8.7	81.3	90.0
Bullying by peers	4.7	5.3	10.0	24.0	66.0	90.0

Moving from primary to high school	4.3	18.0	22.3	31.7	46.0	77.7
Partner aggression	3.7	8.3	12.0	17.0	71.0	88.0
Average	9.9	14.7	24.6	25.4	50.0	75.4

N=300

It appears that writing exams was responsible for the highest levels of stress of Grade 10 learners, with 30.6% experiencing infrequent stress (none or only once or twice), in contrast to 69.4% experiencing stress frequently (fairly often or sometimes). The highest percentage, namely 36.7%, illustrates that exams caused stress fairly often. Academic difficulties were the second highest stressor for Grade 10 learners. It was established that 45.7% indicated infrequent stress while 54.3% indicated frequent stress levels due to academic difficulties. The single majority (33.0%) experienced stress once or twice.

*The way I look* (body image) ranked third in causing stress frequently (31.7%), with similar percentages between the categories, causing stress fairly often and sometimes, (15.0% and 16.7% respectively). Relationships with fathers (12.3%), when compared to stress caused by siblings (10.0%) and mothers (7.0%), were reported to cause the learners stress fairly often. The category, indicated that mothers were responsible for the highest percentage (18.7%) regarding causing stress sometimes, then siblings (18.3%) and, lastly, fathers (15.3%) when compared to stress caused by siblings (10.0%) and mothers (7.0%).

As far as their social relationships with peers were concerned, the results showed that 71.7% of the respondents viewed these interpersonal relationships as causing infrequent stress only. Only a small percentage (6.7%) found that social relationships caused stress fairly often; however, a high percentage of learners (21.7%) did find it to cause stress

sometimes. Relationships with teachers did not appear to cause stress fairly often but it did cause 19.3% of learners stress sometimes. The breakup of a romantic relationship caused 10.3% of learners stress fairly often, and 9.0% found it to be stressful sometimes. Conflict in a romantic relationship resulted in 7.7% experiencing stress fairly often and 12.3% finding it stressful sometimes.

Moving to a different school caused stress fairly often (9%) compared to transitioning from primary to high school (4.3%). However, the transition from primary to high school caused 18% of learners stress sometimes, compared to 13% for moving to a different school.

#### **4.3 COPING RESPONSES**

The CRI-Youth scales and their descriptions were discussed in Chapter 3 in the research instruments section. Table 2 reflects the results of the CRI-Youth Scale.

When examining coping strategies based on Table 2, it was noted that in the considerably above average range (>94 percentile), on average substantially, more learners employed avoidant strategies (19.6%) as opposed to those who employed approach strategies (9.0%). Acceptance and Resignation (AR) (30, 9%) seemed to be the most preferred avoidant strategy for this population, followed by Emotional Discharge (ED). In the well-above average range (84 – 93 percentile) Seeking Reward (SR) was applied most frequently (24.1%) followed by Cognitive Avoidant (CA) (23.3%), which are both avoidant strategies. The preferred approach coping strategy in this range was Logical Analysis (LA) (21.6%). In the somewhat above average range (67 – 83 percentile), approach coping strategies were more frequently applied, with Positive Reappraisal (PR) at 26% and Logical Analysis (LA) at 23.3%.

**Table 2***Preferred coping responses for the total sample*

			<b>Approach Coping</b>					<b>Avoidant Coping</b>				
			<b>Cognitive</b>		<b>Behavioural</b>			<b>Cognitive</b>		<b>Behavioural</b>		
<b>t-score range</b>	<b>Equivalent percentile range</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>LA</b>	<b>PR</b>	<b>SG</b>	<b>PS</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>CA</b>	<b>AR</b>	<b>SR</b>	<b>ED</b>	<b>Mean</b>
<b>Percentage (%) of learners</b>												
> 66	>94	Considerably above average	10.7	10.4	5.3	9.6	9.0	15.0	30.9	8.9	23.6	19.6
60 - 65	84 - 93	Well above average	21.6	12.3	9.7	10.7	13.6	23.3	13.6	24.1	15.0	19.0
55 - 59	67 - 83	Somewhat above average	23.3	26.0	16.7	17.0	20.8	17.4	17.7	13.7	17.6	16.6
46 - 54	34 - 66	Average	20.4	35.3	30.6	40.0	31.6	31.3	21.9	33.4	33.7	30.1
41 - 45	17 - 33	Somewhat below average	11.3	11	17.7	12.0	13.0	5.4	10.3	12.0	7.7	8.8
35 - 40	7 - 16	Well below average	9.0	4.3	20.0	9.6	10.7	5.6	5.6	7.9	2.4	5.4
< 34	< 6	Considerably below average	3.7	0.7	-	1.1	1.3	2.0	-	-	-	0.5

Furthermore, based on Table 2, it can be noted that in the average range (34 – 66 percentile) both approach coping and avoidant coping were employed by more or less an

equal percentage of learners (31.6% and 30.1% respectively). In the Approach Coping category, Problem Solving (40%) was the strategy employed by most learners, followed by Positive Reappraisal (35.3%), Seeking Guidance (30.6%) and Logical Analysis (20.4%). The most commonly employed avoidant coping was Emotional Discharge (33.7%), followed by Seeking Reward (33.4%), Cognitive Avoidant (31.3%) and Acceptance and Resignation (21.9%).

**Table 3**

*Coping responses for the total sample based on below average, average and above average*

		Approach Coping					Avoidant Coping				
		Cognitive		Behavioural			Cognitive		Behavioural		
	<b>Description</b>	<b>LA</b>	<b>PR</b>	<b>SG</b>	<b>PS</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>CA</b>	<b>AR</b>	<b>SR</b>	<b>ED</b>	<b>Mean</b>
		<b>Percentage (%) of learners</b>									
	Above average (67 – 100)	55.6	48.7	31.7	37.3	43.4	55.7	62.2	46.7	56.2	55.2
	Average (34 – 66)	20.4	35.3	30.6	40.0	31.6	31.3	21.9	33.4	33.7	30.1
	Below average (0 – 33)	24.0	16.0	37.7	22.7	25.0	13.0	15.9	19.9	10.1	14.7

When analysing the data based on the responses related to above average, average and below, the following became evident (see Table 3). In the above average range (67 – 100) more learners applied avoidant coping (55.2%) than approach coping (43.4) strategies. The most commonly employed avoidant strategy was Acceptance and Resignation (62.2%), followed by Emotional Discharge (56.2%), Cognitive Avoidant (55.7%) and Seeking Reward (56.2%). This indicates that learners were employing

cognitive and behavioural avoidant strategies more or less equally. Approach coping strategies employed by learners were indicated as follows: Logical Analysis (55.6%), Positive Reappraisal (48.7%), Seeking Guidance (37.3%) and Problem Solving (31.7%). This indicates that learners employed cognitive approach strategies more often than behavioural approach strategies. In the below average range (0 – 41) there was a mean difference of 10.3% between approach coping (25.0%) and avoidant coping (14.7%) in favour of approach coping. Learners employed a combination of cognitive and behavioural coping while, under approach coping, they preferred to Seek Guidance (37.7%), followed by Logical Analysis (24.0%), Problem Solving (22.7%) and Positive Reappraisal (16%). Seeking Reward (19.9%) was the preferred avoidant strategy, followed by Acceptance and Resignation (15.9%), Cognitive Avoidant (13%) and Emotional Discharge (10.1%). With regards to the average category, there was a mean difference of only 1.5% between approach coping (31.6%) and avoidant coping (30.1%). Once again, both behavioural and cognitive approaches were employed under both categories.

#### **4.4 GENDER DIFFERENCES**

##### ***4.4.1 TYPES OF STRESSORS BY GENDER***

Gender differences were calculated by determining the averages for males (n153) and females (n147) separately and then calculating the mean difference on a 4 point scale: 1 (no stress at all), 2 (causes stress once or twice), 3 (causes stress sometimes) and 4 (causes stress fairly often). The maximum score could, therefore, be 4 and the minimum 1. A higher score indicated that the stressor caused higher stress levels.

Table 4 reflects the mean scores for coping responses based on gender. Utilising the SPSS programme, Levene's test for equality of variances was conducted to establish



whether the two groups were comparable. The results were found to be comparable and, therefore, a two sample t-test was conducted to determine whether the mean differences were statistically significant.

**Table 4**

*Types of stressors by gender*

Type of stressor	Gender	Mean	Mean Difference	Sig.
1. Exam stress	M	2.61	.69	.000
	F	3.31		
2. Academic difficulties	M	2.46	.40	.000
	F	2.86		
3. The way I look	M	1.72	.65	.000
	F	2.37		
4. Relationship with father	M	1.78	.44	.000
	F	2.22		
5. Break up in romantic relationships	M	1.74	.00	.973
	F	1.73		
6. Relationship with siblings	M	1.79	.33	.004
	F	2.12		
7. Moving to a different school	M	1.65	.14	.221
	F	1.79		
8. Conflict in a romantic relationship (arguing and fighting)	M	1.61	.21	.058
	F	1.82		
9. Ill health	M	1.73	.11	.304
	F	1.84		
10. Cheating in a romantic relationship	M	1.52	.06	.605
	F	1.58		
11. Relationship with mother	M	1.69	.37	.001
	F	2.06		
12. Social relationship with peers	M	1.71	.59	.000
	F	2.30		
13. Problems with teachers	M	1.93	.01	.920
	F	1.94		
14. Jealousy in romantic relationship	M	1.65	.08	.430
	F	1.57		

15. Parental unemployment	M	1.47	.02	.821
	F	1.45		
16. Parental divorce	M	1.32	.03	.768
	F	1.35		
17. Bullying by peers	M	1.50	.03	.714
	F	1.47		
18. Moving from primary to high school	M	1.65	.14	.221
	F	1.79		
19. Aggression in romantic relationship	M	1.41	.07	.440
	F	1.48		
N = 300				
Df = 298				

(p<0.05) Statistical significance

When examining the results in Table 4, it became evident that, in general, females experienced more stress than males. Males scored only slightly higher than females on bullying by peers (0.03), parental unemployment (0.02), jealousy in romantic relationships (0.08) and break up in romantic relationships (0.00); however, the differences on these scores were negligible and also not statistically significant.

Females experienced more stress than males in the remaining categories. The results presented in Table 4 indicate that females found exam stress significantly more stressful than males, with a mean difference of 0.69. Academic difficulties plagued females more than it did males, with a mean difference of 0.40. Furthermore, females were significantly more concerned with body image than males, and indicated a mean difference of 0.65 on *The way I look*.

Within the family, the females experienced more stress than the males in all the relationships, as indicated in the mean differences of 0.44 with fathers, 0.37 with mothers and 0.33 with siblings. As far as the social relationships with peers were

concerned, the females experienced more stress than the males, with a mean difference of 0.59.

Moving from primary school to high school also caused the females more stress (mean difference of 0.33). The differences between males and females in the remaining categories were negligible and not statistically significant.

#### **4.4.2 COPING RESPONSES BY GENDER**

The results for coping responses by gender are reflected in Table 4. By employing the SPSS programme, Levene's test for equality of variances was conducted to establish whether the two groups were comparable. The results were found to be comparable and, consequently, a two sample t-test was conducted to determine whether the mean differences were statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 5**

*Coping responses by gender*

Coping Response	Gender	Mean	Mean Difference	Sig.
<b>APPROACH COPING</b>				
1. Logical Analysis (LA)	M	50.95	4.96	.000
	F	55.90		
2. Positive Reappraisal (PR)	M	52.59	1.94	.043
	F	54.54		
3. Seeking Guidance and Support (SG)	M	48.70	2.62	.017
	F	51.32		
4. Problem Solving (PS)	M	56.78	1.51	.145
	F	58.29		
<b>AVOIDANT COPING</b>				
5. Cognitive Avoidant (CA)	M	53.57	4.38	.000
	F	57.95		
6. Acceptance and Resignation (AR)	M	51.20	3.71	.001
	F	54.91		

7. Seeking Alternative Rewards (SR)	M	53.94	0.23	.826
	F	53.71		
8. Emotional Discharge (ED)	M	52.63	5.67	.000
	F	58.30		
N = 300				
Df = 298				

(p<0.05) Statistical Significance

The results showed that females scored higher on all of the approach and avoidant coping responses than the males did, except for Seeking Alternative Rewards where the males scored only slightly higher. This indicates that the females were employing more coping strategies than the males. Substantial differences with statistical significance ( $p<0.05$ ) were evident on Logical Analysis (4.96), Cognitive Avoidant (4.38) and Emotional Discharge (5.67). Moderate differences were noticed between males and females on Acceptance and Resignation (3.71), Positive Reappraisal (1.94) and Seeking Guidance (2.62), whereas negligible differences were measured on Problem Solving (1.51) and Seeking Alternative Rewards (0.23). These last two were also not statistically significant ( $p>0.05$ ).

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The concluding chapter discusses the findings related to the three research objectives as presented in Chapter 4, and recommendations are suggested. A discussion of the causes of stress for Grade 10 learners in Windhoek is presented first.

This is followed by a discussion of the most commonly employed coping responses to problems, particularly differentiating between approach and avoidant coping responses. Finally, gender differences in both causes of stress and coping responses to problems are addressed in the discussion and further recommendations are made.

#### **5.2 CAUSES OF STRESS AS PER THE TOTAL SAMPLE**

Firstly, this study established that adolescents found exams to be the major contributor to their stress. These results are consistent with findings by Acosta-Gómez et al., (2018) and Kaushal et al., (2018). It is evident from both these studies that exams are a major contributor to stress in adolescents. Papathanasiou et al. (2015) postulate that adolescents need to be taught ways to prepare for stressful life events, in this case examinations, in order to reduce their levels of stress, especially if it is frequently occurring.

The educational implication for high examination stress is to teach learners ways to cope better during this stressful time. Educators should prepare learners for exams by teaching them organisational and time management skills, as well as allowing them to prepare far enough in advance to avoid cramming in the last minute. Educators should ensure that learners have acquired appropriate study skills and, furthermore, that they are able to interpret examination questions correctly in order to structure the answers that will gain

them maximum points. There will always be a measure of stress during examinations; however, moderate stress is not always negative because it motivates learners to work harder.

Secondly, in this study it was clear that academic difficulty also caused stress for most adolescents. This finding is in accordance with Acosta-Gómez et al., (2018) who postulate that a reason for high academic stress is that schools have become exceedingly competitive, and learners are increasingly being put under pressure to perform. This is also consistent with previous findings indicating that high expectations can lead to uncontrollable stress which has negative effects, such as inciting maladaptive behaviour, especially when adolescents feel unsupported (Papathanasiou et al., 2015; Park & Kim, 2018; Zhang et al., 2015). It was found by Roy et al. (2015) that pressure comes from parents' high expectations. Adolescents mostly put pressure on themselves to achieve (Acosta-Gómez et al., 2018; Kaushal et al., 2018). The source of their academic stress is exams, homework, tests, a heavy workload and competition with their peers as they try to outdo one another.

The research instrument did not delve further into the components of academic stress but relied on literature for more detail. The educational implications for this would be, as with examination stress, to teach better time management skills, set realistic academic goals and foster an atmosphere of competition within oneself rather than with peers. Furthermore, it is necessary to educate parents regarding ways to support their children rather than to pressurise them to achieve, a notion supported by Acosta-Gómez et al. (2018) and Zhang et al. (2018).

In addition, teaching motivation skills to address academic pressures in the form of self-regulation will direct behaviour towards a self-motivated goal. Strategies to develop meaningful and quality learning include self-questioning, self-control and self-assessment (Ackerwold et.al, 2020). Laying these foundations earlier on will prevent problems later.

Body image, the third highest cause of stress, is also considered in this discussion. This finding is consistent with findings from other studies which state, for example, that on a psychological level, body image is linked to stress as a result of internal conflicts and threats to self-esteem (Acosta-Gómez et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2014; Papathanasiou et al., 2015). During adolescence, the individual is in the process of developing a self-identity, and a view of self contributes significantly to its development. It was found that adolescents who had also developed depressive symptoms had unhealthy eating habits (Huli, 2014). Therefore, learners should be taught healthy eating habits and the benefits of regular exercise on both a physical and psychological level. It would also be beneficial to encourage learners to develop a realistic sense of self and learn to accept themselves, with both their successes and shortcomings. The influence of the media is another aspect that should not be excluded as it seems to put pressure on adolescents, although often unrealistic, to look a certain way. It is not easily possible to change the way the media portray perfection, but one can make adolescents aware of the influence of the media on self-image so that they can make better and more informed decisions regarding the way they look.

Based on data from this study, interpersonal relationships with family seem to cause adolescents more stress than their relationships with peers. A possible reason could be

that adolescents are moving away from their families and gravitating towards interpersonal relationships outside the home in an effort to develop independence. However, Zimmer-Gembeck and Skinner (2010) found that social interactions were stressful for adolescents. This notion is supported Bhargava and Trivedi (2018), as well as Latha and Hanumanth (2006) and Roy et al. (2015), who established that adolescents valued the opinions of others highly. They were keen to uphold their position amongst their peers as they build close friendships and romantic relationships (Roy et al., 2015).

Social groups provide adolescents with refuge and social support, especially if they experience conflict at home. If an adolescent feels a lack of support at home, he or she tends to seek refuge in social groups, which is seen as a positive way of coping (Huli, 2014). A possible explanation for the difference in findings could be the age of the population in the study. It may be that, as the Grade 10 learners move up in Grades, they will find interpersonal, social relationships becoming more important than family relationships and it, thus, may become more stressful.

Although *moving to a different school* and *moving to a new school* did not rank as highly as some of the other types of stressors, previous research by Moos (1993) and Zimmer-Gembeck and Skinner (2010) identified certain periods of transition as stressful, especially transitioning from high school to tertiary education. A possible explanation for the findings in this study could be that Grade 10 falls in the middle of the high school years, and periods of transition are not common at this time; however, in order to minimise future stress in periods of transition, discussions and strategies with learners at this stage could have a preventative effect.



### **5.3 COPING RESPONSES AS PER THE TOTAL SAMPLE**

The results from this study, as reflected in Table 2, indicate that in the percentile range of 67 to 100% adolescents relied on avoidant coping (52.2%) as the preferred response to stressors in comparison to 43.3% who relied on approach coping. This finding is similar to previous research that also found that adolescents applied both approach and avoidant coping responses but they relied more heavily on avoidant responses, which are more emotion-focused (avoidant responses) rather than problem-focused (approach responses) (Acosta-Gómez et al., 2018; Herres & McCauley Ohannessian, 2014; Priyanka & Kshipra, 2017).

Research has shown that ineffective or avoidant coping strategies to life's stressors may lead to higher levels of perceived stress and anxiety. This, in turn, can lead to a distressed state of mind, and it might play out in antisocial or self-destructive behaviours as stress becomes out of control (Huli, 2014; Moran, 2015). The percentage of learners in this study who relied on avoidant coping is quite substantial. Therefore, introducing a programme in Windhoek schools that teach learners in Grade 10 to become aware of the type of coping strategy that they are utilising and recognising the difference between approach and avoidant strategies would be beneficial. Learning how to apply approach strategies instead of avoidant strategies at this stage of development may equip learners to deal with stressors further on in their academic careers in order to prevent out-of-control stress and anxiety.

If an individual views the stressor as a threat, he or she will anticipate that it will cause harm and he or she may experience fear, employ an escape method, withdraw or seek support (Zimmer-Gembeck & Skinner, 2010). Grade 10 learners in Windhoek preferred

to employ Acceptance and Resignation, where they simply accepted the stressor they were facing. This was followed by Emotional Discharge when they expressed negative feelings and Cognitive Avoidant when they avoided thinking about the problem. Neither of these strategies helps to resolve the problem which is causing the stress. Using avoidant, disengaged, emotion-focused strategies or simply ignoring or denying the problem does relieve the symptoms for a short time; however, the problem does not go away and may even increase in the long run; such a strategy may, furthermore, translate into behavioural problems (Herres & McCauley Ohannessian, 2014).

When scrutinising results in the percentile range between 67 and 100%, it becomes evident that some learners in Windhoek employed approach coping strategies (43.4%). Table 3 indicates that 55.6% of learners employed Logical Analysis as a preferred approach coping strategy, where the individual makes sense of the problem and prepares for it by attempting to understand it, thus viewing the problem as a challenge. If someone views a problem as a challenge, he or she shows interest in the problem and, potentially, consider a positive outcome for the problem (Zimmer-Gembeck & Skinner, 2010). In addition to Logical Analysis, Grade 10's employed Positive Reappraisal (48.7%) which reduces negative emotions and increases positive emotions after a difficult experience, thus reducing stress and promoting active coping (Malin et al., 2019). This is encouraging to note because if learners are already utilising these two cognitive approach coping strategies, they merely need to become aware that they are doing so and make use of these more frequently. The results from Table 3, in the same percentile range as focused on above, indicate that learners employ the two behavioural strategies, Seeking Guidance (31.7%) in the form of information, guidance or support

and Problem Solving (37.3%) where they deal directly with the problem, less frequently than cognitive strategies. The educational implications are that learners can be taught ways in which to put their plans into action, as well as the practical aspects of approach coping.

The implications drawn from the data regarding approach coping are that, when adolescents view a problem as a challenge, they are more likely to have a positive attitude towards it and will employ approach coping strategies. Educators should, in their daily interactions with adolescents, always try to focus on possibilities rather than on problems. When encountering adolescents experiencing negative emotions, the educator should assist them with reappraising the problem by identifying the positives.

Furthermore, educators should encourage adolescents to move beyond cognitive approach coping strategies to implement the corresponding behavioural strategies. For example, when preparing for exams, learners may spend time planning an elaborate study programme but do not implement it. It is evident that educators need to encourage adolescents to translate thoughts or plans into actions.

Another recommendation is that adolescents need to be taught terminology and definitions related to, as well as the components of, both approach and avoidant strategies as outlined in this research to acquire the vocabulary necessary to express what they are experiencing. Once they are able to identify and express what they are thinking and feeling, they should be able to implement the approach coping strategies that they have been taught.

#### **5.4 TYPES OF STRESSORS BY GENDER**

It became evident from data as reflected in Table 4 that the female learners scored higher on most types of stressors. This finding is in accordance with Kaushal et al. (2018) who explain that females experience more stress than males. The males scored only slightly higher on bullying by peers, parental unemployment, jealousy in romantic relationships and break up in romantic relationships; however, the differences on these scores were negligible.

When looking at the categories where males scored higher, it becomes evident that males value status, power and interpersonal relationships. Males, in developing their identity, are trying to determine their own skills and personal attributes (Huli, 2014). In order to develop a more balanced view of self, educators should encourage males to explore a wider variety of skills that include, and move beyond, physical activities, as well as develop approach coping skills, especially in interpersonal relationships and attitudes.

The statistical significant scores gave evidence that females showed substantially more stress than the males as far as exam and academic stress, body image, interpersonal relationships with peers, fathers, mothers and siblings were concerned. As Moran (2015) points out, schools have become more competitive and stressful while, simultaneously, workloads have increased. Moran (2015) continues that, when females are experiencing anxiety, it affects their ability to concentrate negatively. This, in turn, affects their academic situation. Another possible reason for academic and exam stress could be the higher expectations for females by parents, peers and teachers (Kaushal et al., 2018).

Setting non-competitive academic goals, regularly reviewing these goals and resetting them realistically could help females manage unnecessary academic stress.

The results regarding body image (The way I look) showed a substantial difference between males and females, with the females experiencing more stress than males with regards to the way they look (0.65 point difference). Ganesan et al. (2018) also found that dissatisfaction with their bodies was higher in females, and concluded that body image was no longer a western concept but had spread as far afield as India. They, furthermore, found that adolescent females were more vulnerable as their bodies adjusted to post-pubertal changes. Dissatisfaction with their bodies was attributed to a high BMI, sociocultural pressure to look a certain way and low self-esteem, as well as depression and perfectionism as promoted by the media. Females tend to skip meals or eat smaller portions to improve their appearance and body shape. The potential health implications of this trend cannot be ignored, and educators need to be on the lookout for symptoms, for example weight loss, pallor and listlessness, among their learners, especially females. Education in the school environment should bring about awareness of what a realistic and ideal body weight should be, recognising the influence of the media and the potential health hazards with future consequences.

Interpersonal relationships with peers also caused higher stress for females than for males (mean difference 0.59). A possible reason for this is that females seek social support as a method of coping (Herres & McCauley Ohannessian, 2014). This indicates that they value social relationships highly. Programmes in the Life Skills curriculum should include components that examine group dynamics and develop a balanced sense of self. Furthermore, a student management council in schools usually includes fellow

elected students who have been trained to identify peers in distress in social settings; they could provide help to individuals as needed and bring their difficulties to the attention of teachers and school counsellors.

The research, furthermore, revealed that females had substantially more strained relationships when compared to that of males, indicating a mean difference of 0.44. Horesh et al. (2015) found that the relationships of females with eating disorders with their fathers influenced their disorders and contributed to depressive symptoms, especially if these were negative. They also profiled two types of relationships between fathers and their daughters, namely caring and benevolent and overprotective and avoidant. The latter points to erratic parenting styles. The educational implication of this is that educators should be aware of the fact that girls may be experiencing higher stress in their relationships with their fathers, as a result of fathers having higher expectations of their daughters, by being over protective, over involved, absent or unduly harsh in offering their support.

Relationships with mothers and siblings also indicated female scores to be higher than males on the mean scores. This study found that females employed Emotional Discharge significantly more than males, and this could be a possible reason contributing to more strained interpersonal relationships at home with other family members.

## **5.5 COPING RESPONSES BY GENDER**

The results of this study showed that females scored higher than males on most of the coping strategies. Females also applied both approach coping strategies and avoidant coping strategies more frequently than males, as reflected in Table 5. The implication of this finding is that no claims can be made that females are coping better than males

because females employed both approach and avoidant coping more or less equally. Their choices for a coping strategy most likely depended on the specific problem they were facing. This is consistent with previous research findings that females employ different coping strategies than males (Herres & McCauley Ohannessian, 2014; Foto-Özdemir et al., 2016; Roy et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2015). This notion is further strengthened by the findings of Zimmer-Gembeck and Skinner (2010) who found that females experienced stress more frequently than males, and their responses to stress were different to those of males as they tended to ruminate, an avoidant and distractive strategy. Males also employed distractive strategies which were more physical in nature (Foto-Özdemir et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2014; Zimmer-Gembeck & Skinner, 2010).

The results as presented in Table 5 showed significant differences in the mean between males and females in Emotional Discharge (5.67), Logical Analysis (4.96) and Cognitive Avoidant (4.38) with females scoring higher than males. These findings seem contradictory as Emotional Discharge and Cognitive Avoidant are avoidant strategies and Logical Analysis is an approach strategy. A possible explanation is that some females employed Logical Analysis well, while others relied substantially on Cognitive Avoidant and Emotional Discharge.

Furthermore, Mayordomo-Rodrigues et al., (2015) posit that Emotional Discharge can also serve as an approach strategy as it helps to minimise distress and regulate emotion. It can, however, be equally destructive when expressing emotion is combined with avoidant approaches. In that case, the strategy employed becomes emotion-focused, where the individual suppresses feelings, avoids contemplation and relies on rumination. This seems to affect both males and females, although males are more avoidant in their

approach and females substantially more emotional. It should not be forgotten that females may be employing more Emotional Discharge when venting or chatting about their problems when they look for support. Teaching adolescents to be able to identify and assess the effectiveness of the coping they are utilising, as well as teaching them better alternatives, will ensure more effective management of problems.

Moderate differences were found in Positive Reappraisal (1.94), Seeking Guidance and Support (2.62), and a negligible difference in Problem Solving (1.51). The assumptions for these findings are that females attempt to understand and prepare mentally more in depth than males. Therefore, further research is needed to establish why males do not spend time in thinking about their problems and ways to analyse them. The moderate differences in Positive Reappraisal, Seeking Guidance and Support where females scored higher than males may possibly be linked. When seeking social support, females discuss their problems with friends who help them to analyse their problems and lessen feelings of perceived stress. Therefore, social support structures enable a better logical analysis of problems (Acosta-Gómez et al., 2018; Herres & McCauley Ohannessian, 2014; Zhang et al., 2015).

Both males and females employed Seeking Alternative rewards and the males scored slightly higher. Males rely on activities, such as playing sport and online games, that distract them from a problem (Herres & McCauley Ohannessian, 2014) while females also utilise distraction activities, such as venting, eating, sleeping, watching TV or chatting online (Kim et al., 2014). The implication of these results are that adolescents should be taught to become aware of when they are employing unhelpful strategies, and be taught to resort to utilising problem solving or seeking guidance strategies instead.



## **5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher would like to make the following recommendations:

- Learners should be taught about approach and avoidant coping strategies and learn to identify when they are employing either. The terminology should become part of daily language. This will enable them to think about whether the strategies they are utilising are helpful or not.
- In order to reduce stress, educators should assist learners preparing for examinations and academic demands by teaching them organisational and time management skills and effective study skills, as well as strategies to cope with exam stress more effectively especially through self-regulation.
- Future research can be conducted on the influence of the media on the perceived ideal body image of Namibian adolescents to determine the degree to which the media influence them.
- This study can be repeated on older learners such, as Grade 12s, to establish the ways in which they are responding to stress and how their coping strategies differ from those of Grade 10 learners.

## **5.7 CONCLUSION**

The results of this study show that the majority of adolescents in Grade 10 in Windhoek did not experience high, but only more moderate, levels of stress. The areas most influential were academics, exam stress and body image. Adolescents do employ cognitive approach coping strategies; however, they rely more heavily on avoidant coping strategies when faced with problems and difficulties. Females experience higher

stress levels than males, especially with regards to academics, interpersonal relationships and body image.

These findings suggest that adolescents in Grade 10 would benefit from being able to identify the type of coping strategy they employ when solving problems, reflect on whether the strategy is effective or not and know how to employ more effective strategies instead because they have learnt approach coping strategies. Educators should be sensitive and informed about the differences in coping between genders.

## References

- Ackerwold, L., Adrian, L., & Krager, K. (2020). Self-regulation and the Maturing Mind. *Empowering Research for Educators*, 4(1), Article 5.
- Acosta-Gómez, M. G., De la Roca-Chiapas, J. M., Zavala-Bervena, A., Cisneros, A. E. R., Pérez, V. R., Rodrigues, C. D. S., & Novack, K. (2018). Stress in high school students: A descriptive study. *Journal of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy*, 1(1), 1-10.
- American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Arlington, VA: Author.
- Bandura, A. (1971). *Social Learning Theory*. New York: General Learning Press.
- Bhargava, D., & Trivedi, H. (2018). A study of causes of stress and stress management among youth. *IRA-International Journal of Management & Social Sciences*, 11(03), 108-117.
- Blumenthal, H., Ham, L. S., Cloutier, R. M., Bacon, A. K., & Douglas, M. E. (2016). Social anxiety, disengagement coping, and alcohol-use behaviors among adolescents. *Anxiety, Stress, & Coping*, 29(4), 432-446.
- Coyle, L. D., & Vera, E. M. (2013). Uncontrollable stress, coping, and subjective well-being in urban adolescents. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 16(3), 391-403.
- Esia-Donkoh, K., & Yelkperi, D. (2011). Coping with Stress: Strategies adopted by Students at the Winneba Campus of University of Education, Winneba, Ghana. *US-China Education Review*, B2, 290-299.
- Foto-Özdemir, D., Akdemir, D., & Çuhadaroglu-Çetin, F. (2016). Gender differences in defense mechanisms, ways of coping with stress and sense of identity in adolescent suicide attempts. *Turkish Journal of Paediatrics*, 58(3), 271-281.

- Ganesan, S., Ravishankar, S. L., & Ramalingam, S. (2018). Are Body Image Issues affecting our Adolescents? A Cross-sectional Study among College-going Adolescent Girls. *Indian Journal of Community Medicine*, 43(1), 42-46.
- Glen-Spyon, C. & Jacobs, A. (2019, July 17). Striking a Healthy Balance Between Studies and Mental Health. *The Namibian*. p. 0 Retrieved from <https://www.namibian.com.na/190829/archive-read/Striking-a-Healthy-Balance-Between-Studies-and-Mental-Health>
- Grieve, K., Van Deventer, V., & Mojapelo-Batka, M. (2009). *A Student's A-Z of Psychology*. Lansdowne, South Africa: Juta and Co.
- Herres, J., & McCauley Ohannessian, C. (2015). Adolescent Coping Profiles Differentiate Reports of Depression and Anxiety Symptoms. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 186, 316-319.
- Holmes, T.H., & Rahe, R.H. (1967). The Social Readjustment Rating Scale. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 11(2), 213-218.
- Horesh, N., Sommerfeld, E., Wolf, M., Zubery, E., & Zalsman, G. (2015). Father-daughter relationship and the severity of eating disorders. *European Psychiatry*, 30(1), 114-120.
- Huli, P. R. (2014). Stress Management in Adolescence. *Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science*, 2(7), 50-57.
- Kaushal, Y., Koreti, S., & Gaur, A. (2018). Educational stress and coping strategies in school going adolescents. *International Journal of Contemporary Paediatrics*, 5(4), 1452.

- Kim, S. M., Han, D. H., Trksak, G. H., & Lee, Y. S. (2014). Gender differences in adolescent coping behaviors and suicidal ideation: Findings from a sample of 73,238 adolescents. *Anxiety, Stress and Coping*, 27(4), 439-454.
- King, K.M., McLaughlin, K.A., Silk, J., & Monahan, K.C. (2018). Peer effects on self-regulation in adolescence depend on the nature and quality of peer interaction. *Dev Psychopathol.*30(4), 1389-1401.
- Latha, K. S., & Hanumanth R., (2006). Patterns of Stress, Coping Styles and Social Supports among Adolescents. *Mental Health*, 3(1), 5-10.
- Lazarus, R. S. (1999). *Stress and Emotion: A New Synthesis*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1987). Transactional theory and research on emotions and coping. *European Journal of personality*, 1(3), 141-169.
- Malin, H., Morton, E., Nadal, A., & Smith, K. A. (2019). Purpose and coping with adversity: A repeated measures, mixed-methods study with young adolescents. *Journal of Adolescence*, 76, 1-11.
- Mayordomo-Rodríguez, T., Meléndez-Moral, J. C., Viguer-Segui, P., & Sales-Galán, A. (2015). Coping Strategies as Predictors of Well-Being in Youth Adult. *Social Indicators Research*, 122(2), 479-489.
- Mertens, D. M. (2015). *Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology*. Los Angeles, LA: Sage Publications.
- Moos, R. H. (1993). *Coping Response Inventory: CRI-Youth Form Professional Manual*. Florida, FL: PAR.
- Moos, R. H. (2004). *Coping Responses Inventory: An Update on Research Applications and Validity. Manual Supplement*. Florida, FL:PAR.

- Moran, K. (2015). Anxiety in the classroom: Implications for middle school teachers. In *Source: Middle School Journal*, 47, 27-32.
- Nabavi, R.T. (2016). Bandura's Social Learning Theory & Social Cognitive Learning Theory. *Researchgate.net*. January 2012.
- Nembwaya, H. (2019, October 11). Namibia suicide rate worrisome. *The Namibian*. p. 13 Retrieved from <https://www.namibian.com.na/84185/read/Namibia-suicide-rate-worrisome>
- Papathanasiou, I.V., Tsaras, K., Neroliatsiou, A., & Roupas, A. (2015). Stress: Concepts, Theoretical Models and Nursing Interventions. *American Journal of Nursing Science*, 4(2), 45-50.
- Park, S. H., & Kim, Y. (2018). Ways of coping with excessive academic stress among Korean adolescents during leisure time. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being*, 13(1) 1-9.
- Priyanka, & Kshipra. (2017). Stress faced by adolescents and coping strategies employed to face stress; *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 22(6) 16-20.
- Roy, K., Kamath, V., & Kamath, A. (2015). Determinants of adolescent stress: A narrative review. *European Journal of Psychology and Educational Studies*, 2(2), 48-58.
- Selye, H. (1936). A syndrome produced by diverse nocuous agents. *Nature*, 138(3479), 32-32.
- Sigfusdottir, I. D., Kristjansson, A. L., Thorlindsson, T., & Allegrante, J. P. (2017). Stress and adolescent well-being: The need for an interdisciplinary framework. *Health Promotion International*, 32(6), 1081-1090.

- Simuforosa, M. (2013). Stress and Adolescent Development. *Greener Journal of Educational Research*, 3(8), 373-380.
- Shahsavarani, A. M., Esfandiar, A. M. A., & Kalkhoran, M. H. (2015). Stress: Facts and Theories through Literature Review. *International Journal of Medical Review*, 2(2), 230-241.
- Zhang, B., Yan, X., Zhao, F., & Yuan, F. (2015). The Relationship between perceived Stress and Adolescent Depression: The Roles of Social of Social Support and Gender. *Springer*, 123(2), 501-518.
- Zimmer-Gembeck, & M. J., Skinner, E. A. (2010). Adolescents coping with stress: Development and diversity. *School Nurse News*, 27(2), 23-28.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: RESEARCH ETHICAL CLEARANCE (UNAM)



#### ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

**Ethical Clearance Reference Number:** FOE/470/2019

**Date:** 24 June 2019

This Ethical Clearance Certificate is issued by the University of Namibia Research Ethics Committee (UREC) in accordance with the University of Namibia's Research Ethics Policy and Guidelines. Ethical approval is given in respect of undertakings contained in the Research Project outlined below. This Certificate is issued on the recommendations of the ethical evaluation done by the Faculty/Centre/Campus Research & Publications Committee sitting with the Postgraduate Studies Committee.

**Title of Project:** Coping responses to stress as expressed by Grade Ten learners in Windhoek, Namibia

**Nature/Level of Project:** Masters

**Researcher:** JACQUELINE B. LUYT

**Student Number:** 9317796

**Faculty:** Faculty of Education

**Supervisors:** Prof M. L. Mostert (Main) and Prof C. Wilders (Co)

Take note of the following:

- (a) Any significant changes in the conditions or undertakings outlined in the approved Proposal must be communicated to the UREC. An application to make amendments may be necessary.
- (b) Any breaches of ethical undertakings or practices that have an impact on ethical conduct of the research must be reported to the UREC.
- (c) The Principal Researcher must report issues of ethical compliance to the UREC (through the Chairperson of the Faculty/Centre/Campus Research & Publications Committee) at the end of the Project or as may be requested by UREC.
- (d) The UREC retains the right to:
  - (i) Withdraw or amend this Ethical Clearance if any unethical practices (as outlined in the Research Ethics Policy) have been detected or suspected.
  - (ii) Request for an ethical compliance report at any point during the course of the research.

REC wishes you the best in your research.

REC Chairperson

Dr. E. de Villiers: HREC Chairperson

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. de Villiers', is written over a horizontal line.



## APPENDIX B: PERMISSION FROM THE OFFICE OF THE PS



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

### MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE

Tel: +264 61-2633262  
Fax: +264 61-2633222  
Enquiries: G. Munene  
Email: [Gileon.munene@me.gov.na](mailto:Gileon.munene@me.gov.na)

1 Luther Street, Gore, Office Park  
Private Bag 13186  
Windhoek  
Namibia

File no: 11/1/1

Ms Jacqueline Luyt  
Windhoek  
Email: [jl@spenam.org](mailto:jl@spenam.org)  
Cell: 081 212 9950

Dear Ms Luyt,

#### SUBJECT: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN KHOMAS REGION

Kindly be informed that permission to conduct an academic research for your Master's Degree in Educational Psychology (School Guidance and Counselling) in "*Coping Responses to Stress as Expressed by Grade Ten Learners in Windhoek, Khomas Region in Namibia*," is here with granted. You are requested to present this letter of approval to the Regional Director to ensure that research ethics are adhered to and disruption of curriculum delivery is avoided.

Furthermore, we humbly request you to share your research findings with the Ministry. You may contact Mr G. Munene at the Directorate: Programmes and Quality Assurance (PQA) for submission of a summary of your research findings.

I wish you the best in conducting your research and I look forward to hearing from you upon completion of your study.

Sincerely yours

  
SANET L. STEENKAMP  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



*All official correspondences must be addressed to the Executive Director.*

## APPENDIX C: PERMISSION FROM THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA  
KHOMAS REGIONAL COUNCIL  
DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE

Tel: [09 264 61] 293 9411  
Fax: [09 264 61] 231 367/248 251

Private Bag 13236  
WINDHOEK

Ms Jacqueline Luyt  
St Paul's College  
Windhoek  
[jl@spcnam.org](mailto:jl@spcnam.org)  
Contact: 081 212 9950

**RE: PERMISSION TO DO RESEARCH IN KHOMAS REGION SCHOOLS**

Your letter dated 8 July 2019 on the above topic refers.

Permission is hereby granted to you to conduct your research for your Master Degree in Educational Psychology (School Guidance and Counseling) field titled: "Coping responses to stress as expressed by Grade 10 learners in Windhoek," in the following government schools. Delta Secondary School, Centaurus High School, Hochland High School and Windhoek High School in Khomas Region.

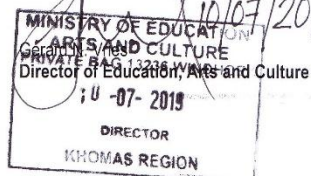
The following conditions must be adhered to:

- Permission must be granted by the School Principal;
- Teaching and learning in the respective schools should not be disrupted;
- Teachers/learners who will take part in the research should do so voluntarily;
- A copy of your thesis with your findings/recommendations must be provided to the Directorate of Education, Arts and Culture, Khomas Regional Council.

St Paul's College and Combretum Trust are private schools therefore you have to approach them and their governing bodies to get permission.

I trust this confirmation will suffice.

Yours sincerely



**APPENDIX D: INFORMED PARENT CONSENT LETTER  
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND  
CONSENT FORM**

**ANNEX 5**



**TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:** COPING RESPONSES TO STRESS  
AS EXPRESSED BY GRADE TEN LEARNERS IN WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA

**REFERENCE NUMBER:** FOE/470/2019

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Jacqueline Luyt

**ADDRESS:** P.O. Box 81323, Olympia, Windhoek

**CONTACT NUMBER:** 0812129950

Your child is invited to take part in a research project. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project. Please ask the researcher any questions about any part of this project that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research entails and how your child could be involved. Also, your child's participation is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to decline to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part.

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee at The University of Namibia and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the international Declaration of Helsinki, South African Guidelines for Good Clinical Practice and Namibian National Research Ethics Guidelines.

## **APPENDIX E: INFORMED LEARNER CONSENT LETTER PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM**

### **ANNEX 5**



#### **Learner consent form**

**TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:** COPING RESPONSES TO STRESS AS EXPRESSED BY GRADE TEN LEARNERS IN WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA

**REFERENCE NUMBER:** FOE/470/2019

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Jacqueline Luyt

**ADDRESS:** P.O. Box 81323, Olympia, Windhoek

**CONTACT NUMBER:** 0812129950

You are invited to take part in a research project. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project. Please ask the researcher any questions about any part of this project that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research entails and how you could be involved. Also know that your participation is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to decline to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part.

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee at The University of Namibia and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the international Declaration of Helsinki, South African Guidelines for Good Clinical Practice and Namibian National Research Ethics Guidelines.

## APPENDIX F: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

### Checklist of Types of Stressors

Please indicate the level of stress each item from the checklist causes you by marking it with an X under the appropriate column.

Type of stressors	1 No stress at all	2 Caused stress once or twice	3 Yes, causes stress sometimes	4 Yes, causes stress fairly often
<b>School</b>				
1. Social relationships with peers				
2. Bullying by peers				
3. Problems with teachers				
4. Academic difficulties				
5. Exam stress				
6. Moving to a different school				
7. Moving from primary to high school				
<b>Family</b>				
1. Relationship with mother				
2. Relationship with father				
3. Relationships with siblings				
4. Parental divorce				
5. Parental unemployment				
<b>Romantic relationships</b>				
1. Conflict (Arguing and fighting)				
2. Jealousy				
3. Aggression				
4. Cheating				
5. Break up				
<b>Health</b>				
1. Ill health				
2. The way I look				

# CRI-YOUTH FORM

## Item Booklet

Rudolf H. Moos, PhD

**Directions:**

On the accompanying answer sheet, please fill in your name, today's date, and your sex, age, grade in school, and ethnic group. Please mark all your answers on the answer sheet. **Do not write in this booklet.**

**PAR** • 16204 N. Florida Ave. • Lutz, FL 33549 • 1.800.331.8378 • [www.parinc.com](http://www.parinc.com)

Copyright © 1998 by Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc. (PAR, Inc.). All rights reserved. May not be reproduced in whole or in part in any form or by any means without written permission of Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc. This form is printed in blue ink on white paper. Any other version is unauthorized.

3 8

Reorder # RO-2032

Printed in the U.S.A.

**WARNING: PHOTOCOPYING OR DUPLICATION OF THIS FORM WITHOUT PERMISSION IS A VIOLATION OF COPYRIGHT LAWS.**

### Part 1

This booklet contains questions about how you deal with important problems that come up in your life. Please think about the most important problem or stressful situation you have experienced **in the last 12 months** (for example, a problem with your parents, a problem at school, a serious illness or accident, or the death of a family member or a friend). Briefly describe the problem in the space provided in Part 1 of the answer sheet. If you have not experienced a major problem, list a minor problem that you have had to deal with. Then answer each of the 10 questions about the problem or situation (listed below and again on the answer sheet) by circling the appropriate response:

Circle "**DN**" if your response is **DEFINITELY NO**.

Circle "**MN**" if your response is **MAINLY NO**.

Circle "**MY**" if your response is **MAINLY YES**.

Circle "**DY**" if your response is **DEFINITELY YES**.

<input checked="" type="radio"/> <b>DN</b>	<input type="radio"/> MN	<input type="radio"/> MY	<input type="radio"/> DY
<input type="radio"/> DN	<input checked="" type="radio"/> <b>MN</b>	<input type="radio"/> MY	<input type="radio"/> DY
<input type="radio"/> DN	<input type="radio"/> MN	<input checked="" type="radio"/> <b>MY</b>	<input type="radio"/> DY
<input type="radio"/> DN	<input type="radio"/> MN	<input type="radio"/> MY	<input checked="" type="radio"/> <b>DY</b>

1. Have you ever faced a problem like this before?
2. Did you know this problem was going to happen to you?
3. Did you have enough time to get ready to deal with the problem?
4. When this problem happened, did you think about how it might harm you?
5. When this problem happened, did you think of it as a challenge?
6. Was this problem caused by something you did?
7. Was this problem caused by something someone else did?
8. Did anything good come out of dealing with this problem?
9. Has this problem or situation been worked out?
10. If the problem has been worked out, did it turn out all right for you?



## Part 2

Read each item carefully and indicate how often you took that action to deal with the problem you described in Part 1. Circle the appropriate response on the answer sheet:

Circle "**N**" if your response is NO, **N**ot at all.

Circle "**O**" if your response is YES, **O**nce or Twice.

Circle "**S**" if your response is YES, **S**ometimes.

Circle "**F**" if your response is YES, **F**airly often.

<input checked="" type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> O	<input type="radio"/> S	<input type="radio"/> F
<input type="radio"/> N	<input checked="" type="radio"/> O	<input type="radio"/> S	<input type="radio"/> F
<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> O	<input checked="" type="radio"/> S	<input type="radio"/> F
<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> O	<input type="radio"/> S	<input checked="" type="radio"/> F

There are 48 items in Part 2. Remember to mark all your answers on the answer sheet. Please answer each question as accurately as you can. All your answers are strictly confidential. If you do not wish to answer a question, please circle the number of that question on the answer sheet to indicate that you have decided to skip it. If an item does not apply to you, please write **NA** (Not Applicable) in the box to the right of the number for that item. If you wish to change an answer, make an **X** through your first answer and circle the new answer. Note that answers are numbered across in rows on Part 2 of the answer sheet.

1. Did you think of different ways to deal with the problem?
2. Did you tell yourself things to make yourself feel better?
3. Did you talk with a parent or other family member about the problem?
4. Did you decide on one way to deal with the problem and do it?
5. Did you try to forget the whole thing?
6. Did you feel that time would make a difference—that the only thing to do was wait?
7. Did you get involved in new activities?
8. Did you take it out on other people when you felt angry or sad?
9. Did you try to step back from the problem and think about it?
10. Did you tell yourself that things could be worse?
11. Did you talk with a friend about the problem?
12. Did you know what had to be done and try hard to make things work?
13. Did you try not to think about the problem?
14. Did you realize that you had no control over the problem?
15. Did you try to make new friends?
16. Did you take a chance and do something risky?
17. Did you go over in your mind what you would say or do?
18. Did you try to see the good side of the situation?
19. Did you talk with an adult like a teacher, coach, counselor, clergyman, or doctor?
20. Did you decide what you wanted and try to get it?



21. Did you daydream or imagine things being better than they were?
22. Did you think that the outcome would be decided by fate?
23. Did you begin to read more often for enjoyment?
24. Did you yell or shout to let off steam?
25. Did you think about how things might turn out?
26. Did you keep thinking about how you were better off than other people with the same problems?
27. Did you look for help from other kids or groups with the same type of problem?
28. Did you try at least two different ways to solve the problem?
29. Did you put off thinking about the situation, even though you knew you would have to at some point?
30. Did you accept the problem because nothing could be done to change it?
31. Did you begin to spend more time in fun activities, like sports, parties, and going shopping?
32. Did you cry to let your feelings out?
33. Did you try to make sense out of why this problem happened to you?
34. Did you try to tell yourself that things would get better?
35. Did you ask a friend to help you solve the problem?
36. Did you try to do more things on your own?
37. Did you wish the problem would go away or somehow be over with?
38. Did you expect the worst possible outcome?
39. Did you try to keep busy with school or other things to help you cope?
40. Did you do something that you didn't think would work, but at least you were doing something?
41. Did you think about the new hardships that would be placed on you?
42. Did you think about how this situation could change your life for the better?
43. Did you ask for sympathy and understanding from someone?
44. Did you take things a day at a time, one step at a time?
45. Did you try to deny how serious the problem really was?
46. Did you lose hope that things would ever be the same?
47. Did you find new ways to enjoy life?
48. Did you listen to music as a way to cope?

# CRI-YOUTH ANSWER SHEET

Form: Actual \_\_\_\_\_ Ideal \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ Sex \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Grade in School \_\_\_\_\_ Ethnic Group \_\_\_\_\_

## Part 1

Describe the problem or situation \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**DN = Definitely No**

**MN = Mainly No**

**MY = Mainly Yes**

**DY = Definitely Yes**

1. Have you ever faced a problem like this before? DN MN MY DY
2. Did you know this problem was going to happen to you? DN MN MY DY
3. Did you have enough time to get ready to deal with this problem? DN MN MY DY
4. When this problem happened, did you think of it as a threat? DN MN MY DY
5. When this problem happened, did you think of it as a challenge? DN MN MY DY
6. Was this problem caused by something you did? DN MN MY DY
7. Was this problem caused by something someone else did? DN MN MY DY
8. Did anything good come out of dealing with this problem? DN MN MY DY
9. Has this problem or situation been worked out? DN MN MY DY
10. If the problem has been worked out, did it turn out all right for you? DN MN MY DY

## Part 2

**N = No, Not at all**

**O = Yes, Once or twice**

**S = Yes, Sometimes**

**F = Yes, Fairly often**

1 0 1 2 3	2 0 1 2 3	3 0 1 2 3	4 0 1 2 3	5 0 1 2 3	6 0 1 2 3	7 0 1 2 3	8 0 1 2 3
9 0 1 2 3	10 0 1 2 3	11 0 1 2 3	12 0 1 2 3	13 0 1 2 3	14 0 1 2 3	15 0 1 2 3	16 0 1 2 3
17 0 1 2 3	18 0 1 2 3	19 0 1 2 3	20 0 1 2 3	21 0 1 2 3	22 0 1 2 3	23 0 1 2 3	24 0 1 2 3
25 0 1 2 3	26 0 1 2 3	27 0 1 2 3	28 0 1 2 3	29 0 1 2 3	30 0 1 2 3	31 0 1 2 3	32 0 1 2 3
33 0 1 2 3	34 0 1 2 3	35 0 1 2 3	36 0 1 2 3	37 0 1 2 3	38 0 1 2 3	39 0 1 2 3	40 0 1 2 3
41 0 1 2 3	42 0 1 2 3	43 0 1 2 3	44 0 1 2 3	45 0 1 2 3	46 0 1 2 3	47 0 1 2 3	48 0 1 2 3

**LA**

**PR**

**SG**

**PS**

**CA**

**AR**

**SR**

**ED**

Total the circled item scores within each column and record the totals in the space provided at the bottom of each column.

**PAR** • 16204 N. Florida Ave. • Lutz, FL 33549 • 1.800.331.8378 • www.parinc.com

Copyright © 1993 by PAR. All rights reserved. May not be reproduced in whole or in part in any form or by any means without written permission of PAR. This form is printed in blue ink on carbonless paper. Any other version is unauthorized.  
 987654321

Reorder #RU-2334

Printed in the U.S.A.

**WARNING! PHOTOCOPYING OR DUPLICATION OF THIS FORM WITHOUT PERMISSION IS A VIOLATION OF COPYRIGHT LAWS.**

# CRI-YOUTH PROFILE

T Score	Raw Score								T Score
80+									80+
79			18			18		18	79
78									78
77						17			77
76			17				18		76
75					18				75
74			16			16	17		74
73		18		18					73
72	18				17				72
71			15			15	16		71
70	17	17		17		16			70
69			14			14	15		69
68		16		16		15			68
67	16		13				14		67
66		15		15		13			66
65					14		13		65
64		14		12		12		12	64
63					13				63
62	14	13		11			12		62
61				13		12		11	61
60	13						11		60
59		12		12				10	59
58					11		10		58
57	12	11		9				9	57
56					11		10		56
55	11	10				9		9	55
54			8		10			8	54
53		9				9	8		53
52	10		7		9			7	52
51						8	7		51
50	9	8							50
49			6		6		5		49
48		7				7		5	48
47	6		5		7				47
46		6				6		5	46
45	7		4		6		5		45
44		5				5		4	44
43							4		43
42	6	4		3		5		3	42
41						4			41
40	5		2		4		3		40
39		3				3		2	39
38					3		2		38
37	4	2		1				1	37
36						2			36
35	3	1		0		2		1	35
34							1	0	34
33	2	0			1				33
32						0			32
31					0				31
30	1								30
29									29
28	0								28
27									27
26									26
25									25
24									24
23									23
22									22
21									21
20									20

Raw  
Score

8

LA

PR

SG

PS

CA

AR

SR

ED

**PAR** • 16204 N. Florida Ave. • Lutz, FL 33549 • 1.800.331.8378 • [www.parinc.com](http://www.parinc.com)