

**UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE**

**Faculty of Community and Health Sciences**

Determining levels of coping and emotional intelligence in psychology students at the  
University of the Western Cape: A quantitative study

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Research Project

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## ABSTRACT

Literature on the experiences of psychology students is limited, particularly in the South African context of previously disadvantaged institutions. More specifically, not much is known about levels of emotional intelligence (EI) and coping during higher education training. Successful academic performance depends on adherence to EI criteria, including accurate acknowledgement of, and responses to emotions in others, efficiently negotiating relationships and directing one's motivations towards explicit goals. Coping refers to the constantly changing cognitive and behavioural responses that attempt to manage internal and/or external stressors. This study aimed to understand the relationship between emotional intelligence and coping, and tested the hypothesis that higher levels of emotional intelligence will be associated with higher levels of coping. It adopted a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional survey research design. The sample included 114 students who were enrolled in the psychology third-year and honours programmes at the University of the Western Cape at the time of the study. A purposive, convenience sampling method was used, and data was collected using a self-constructed demographic questionnaire (DQ), the Assessing Emotions Scale (AES), and the Ways of Coping Scale (WOCS). The Statistical Software Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse the data. Correlational analysis of variance (ANOVA) and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) were applied. Ethical stipulations included that participation was voluntary, the identity of respondents was kept anonymous, and confidentiality was respected.

The findings indicated that there was no significant relationship between EI and coping. Conversely, it was found that students who worked while studying displayed increased levels of EI, and those who intended to further their studies on master's level, utilised higher-level coping strategies. Recommendations are therefore that further studies include actual measured abilities to complement the self-report instrument used in this study.

**Keywords:** *psychology, honours, postgraduate, selections, coping, emotional intelligence, stress, anxiety, resilience, challenges, mental well-being*



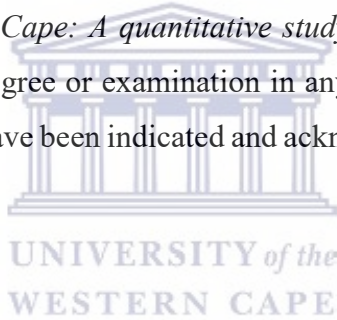
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### Plagiarism Declaration

I declare that *Determining levels of coping and emotional intelligence in psychology students at the University of the Western Cape: A quantitative study* is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the resources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.



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Melissa Delpont

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Date

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“Everyone who remembers his own education remembers teachers, not methods and techniques. The teacher is the heart of the educational system.” – Sidney Hook

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## CHAPTER 1

### OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

#### 1.1. Introduction to the study

An alarming 35% of students discontinue their studies after their first year of enrolment (SAPA, 2008). A mere 15% of enrolled students complete their degrees in the given time and 20% discontinue their studies after the second or third year of education. It is imperative for students to be in a position where they can succeed in their educational endeavours, which can be defined as completing their studies to the intended extent. In the case of psychology students at the University of the Western Cape, this includes master's level. Student success rates in South African higher education institutions are therefore of great concern.

The majority of students currently entering university are first-generation students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds who are still experiencing the lasting effects of the apartheid education system (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges & Hayek, 2006). In general, only a minority of students who access postgraduate studies are able to enhance their qualifications, and even fewer students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds seem to be able to complete their studies (Honikman, 1982; Luthuli, Masiea & Zuma, 1992). African and female students, in particular, continue to be considerably underrepresented at postgraduate level, with little progress in the overall university participation of so-called African and Coloured<sup>1</sup> South Africans. It is essential to problematise race, as racial classification has been intensely challenged and disputed because of the history of oppression and segregation stemming from the apartheid regime. In 2010, the general involvement of these ethnicities was a mere 18% (CHE, 2012, p. 3). These statistics, considered alongside qualification levels, patterns of enrolment and methods of study, demonstrate that black people and women continue to be underrepresented in South African higher education (Badat & Sayed, 2014). This implies that African and female students are less likely to enhance their qualification levels, which, in turn, can influence access to particular fields that require a higher qualification to enter the professional realm (for example, the field of psychology).

While the reasons for the underrepresentation of black and female students are wider,

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<sup>1</sup> Black people is a term used in certain countries, often in socially based systems of racial classification or of ethnicity, to describe persons who are perceived to be dark-skinned compared to other populations. The terms 'Black' and 'African' are used interchangeably for this cohort. Coloured people are a multiracial ethnic group native to Southern Africa who have ancestry from more than one of the various populations inhabiting the region, including Khoisan, Bantu, Afrikaner, English, Austronesian, East Asian or South Asian.



continuously evolving and more complex than scarce academic and personal resources, the latter factors do impact on successful outcomes. Research that examines the factors that may influence students' success is thus crucial (Badat & Sayed, 2014).

According to Kuh et al. (2006), student success is defined as academic achievement, engagement in educationally purposeful activities, satisfaction, acquisition of desired knowledge, skills and competencies, persistence, attainment of educational outcomes, and post-university performance.

Resources can have various dimensions, such as physical or personal resources (Beauvais, Stewart, DeNisco & Beauvais, 2014). Personal resources such as psychological empowerment, resilience, spiritual well-being, motivation, attitude, academic skills, and external support might be as important as physical resources such as finances and food when academic success rate is considered (Beauvais et al., 2014; Brady-Amoon & Fuertes, 2011). A study by O'Donell, Tobbell, Lawthom and Zammit (2009) found that the likelihood of postgraduate university participation and success was weakened by university processes that did not account for individual knowledge and skills bases which inevitably undermine successful completion rates for students. In this regard, skills may also include how an individual (in this case a student) responds to challenges or stressors yielded by their environment (for example, the academic environment). This is referred to as coping skills in the literature (Amemiya & Wang, 2018). Studies on tertiary education success rates also consistently show that a lack of personal resources impact at-risk students' completion rates (Kuh et al., 2006; O'Donell et al., 2009; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Personal resources that assist in successful educational circumstances include, more specifically, psychological empowerment, resilience, spiritual well-being and scholastic academic success (Beauvais et al., 2014). All of the aforementioned resources relate to coping with stressors in the sense that they can enable a person to respond positively to stressors (Ahammed, Abdullah & Hassane, 2011; Beauvais et al., 2014; Cleary, Platten & Jansen, 2008; Deb, 2012; Kneipp, Kelly & Cyphers, 2009; Sparkman, Maulding & Roberts, 2012). While it is a combination of academic and personal resources that determine academic success for all students, the extent to which personal resources may be more crucial for success in some fields is not clear.

Fields like education and the health sciences, which involve a greater degree of interpersonal exchange, may place greater demands on students' personal resources and require well-developed coping strategies (Hannigan, Edwards & Burnard, 2004). This might be particularly true where students are expected to do more practical work with people. For

example, some academic fields such as psychology require a combination of academic and personal qualities for entry into the profession (Hannigan et al., 2004). Psychology students should, in particular, be agreeable to interact with, have integrity, be accountable, honest and equitable, respect individual and cultural differences and should not have any serious psychopathology (Gilbourne & Richardson, 2006). Psychology students must possess a combination of the mentioned traits, as these are the qualities that are required to grant entry into the profession according to the selection criteria at master's level. Thus, a need exists for studies that focus on the exploration of the personal resources mentioned above, especially in fields such as psychology, where they are also entry requirements. These resources determine emotional intelligence (EI) and the coping strategies that ultimately contribute to academic success. EI refers to the ability to gauge one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to differentiate between them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions (Salovey and Mayer, 1990).

While there are diverse approaches to studying personal resources (Diener & Fujita, 1995), EI and its role in coping with stressors is one potentially useful framework to formulate the problem of the study, as discussed below. EI can be considered to be one of the crucial aspects of psychological mindedness (McCallum & Piper, 2000) and therefore an important area of research focus for psychology students.

## **1.2. Problem statement**

One approach to exploring personal resources that has gained momentum more recently is the work associated with EI (Druskat, Mount & Sala, 2013). EI can be described as the ability to identify one's own emotions and to be able to accurately identify the emotions experienced by others. An individual with sufficient EI is able to use the information regarding their own emotions and the emotions of others to guide their thinking and behaviour. The process of guiding their behaviour in an effective manner enables an individual to adjust to their context in order to achieve a goal (Colman, 2008). Higher EI have also been associated with higher levels of coping behaviour (Wan, Downey & Stough, 2014). High EI levels have been associated with better management of challenging situations, lower levels of stress hormones and other physiological indicators of emotional arousal (Sadock & Ruiz, 2015). Thus, positive emotional- and problem-focused coping with stressors is known to depend on an individual's level of EI (Noorbakhsh, Besharat & Zarei, 2010).

The present study focuses on the relationship between EI and coping with stressors in psychology students. There is a need to ascertain what these levels are in psychology students,

because high EI is particularly relevant to psychology as a science. Studies have shown a moderate link between self-esteem and EI (Kong, Zhao & You, 2012). Sadock and Ruiz (2015) argue that the more EI and empathy an individual possesses, the more they are valued by others, thus increasing societal support, intimate relations and self-esteem. With the role of a healthy self-esteem in mind, it is assumed that a psychology student should ultimately have above-average EI, as they are supposed to be grounded and able to respond to not only their own challenges, but also the problems of those whom they serve (Barbash, 2015). Nevertheless, the question is whether psychology students do, in fact, have higher EI and whether EI is supported or overwritten by available personal resources, or the lack thereof, and what the subsequent impact is on their ability or inability to respond to their environmental and academic stressors. In this regard, one should acknowledge demographics, as they often have a direct influence on coping with stressors (Persaud & Persaud, 2015). While the focus is on psychology students, the study has broader implications for all students.

Research on the relationship between EI, coping, and personal resources employed by psychology students is needed in order for universities to gauge students' capacity to meet the personal and educational requirements for admission. This information could inform initiatives on how the university could offer support in order to enhance students' experiences, increase their potential to graduate and possibly contribute the likelihood of a student being selected for master's studies.

### **1.3. Rationale and motivation for study**

The rationale for this study is to explore whether there is a link between EI and the coping ability of students from previously disadvantaged and continuously marginalised communities with regard to successfully completing and continuing tertiary studies. In order to achieve this, it is essential to firstly grasp which factors contribute to student success rates at tertiary level. This is particularly important for students in the field of psychology, as specific entry requirements are in place for student selection into professional programmes. It is therefore pertinent that these factors are better understood. The results are aimed at improving programmes and methods to enhance and develop coping with stressors and applying personal resources that are essential to student success.

### **1.4. Research question**

The three main research questions emerging from the aforementioned objectives were identified as:

- What is the relationship between coping and EI?
- What is the relationship between demographic factors and EI? Specifically, what is the relationship between gender, ethnicity, the decision to enrol for a master's, working while studying and obtaining a bursary and EI?
- What is the relationship between demographic factors and coping? Specifically, what is the relationship between gender, ethnicity, the decision to enrol for a master's, working while studying and obtaining a bursary and EI?



## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the literature on academic success, interpersonal and demographic influences during postgraduate studies, effective and ineffective coping strategies, EI, the relationship between these factors and Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory, which underpins this study.

#### 2.1. Defining success in the context of this study

South Africa's university history is characterised by advantaged and disadvantaged practices that can impact on certain groups of South African citizens (Dass-Brailsford, 2005). Research in general demonstrates that students from economically and scholastically disadvantaged groups are predominantly susceptible to adjustment problems in transitioning from school to institutions of higher education (Felner et al., 1995; Fox, 1986). According to South African statistics on tertiary success rates, students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds seem to be less likely to succeed in their studies (Department of Higher Education And Training, 2016) (DHET). DHET defines success in tertiary education in terms of pass rate and completion rate (2017). Altbach and Knight (2007) mention that a graduate's volition during the study years, in addition to their willingness to continue their studies on postgraduate level, should also be considered as success, as some fields (for example, psychology) require further study for job entrance.

Unfortunately, as stated in the introduction, students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds still seem less likely to succeed in their tertiary studies. Researchers such as Poole (2016) and Allen (1992) attribute the lack of success of students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds to some significant factors: academic underpreparedness for university, a lack of financial resources, and a lack of ability to apply their personal resources. Moreover, another factor that seems to relate to the lack of success of students from previously disadvantaged groups is that many students from these groups are first-generation university students with little reference to experience specifically in terms of what is expected at this level (Bui, 2002). It is therefore crucial for universities to address the issues that could promote a positive student experience, which could, in turn, enhance the success rates of students from previously disadvantaged groups.

Studies have focused on the role of adjusting to university demands in order to enhance student experience from different perspectives. In this regard, Robbins et al. (2004) researched adjustment as an outcome variable of academic success, while others researched adjustment as a predictor variable for academic performance. According to Robbins et al. (2004), adjustment to university, help-seeking (student-faculty contact and the utilisation of student support services), academic motivation, and self-esteem are possible contributors to the academic success of students from previously disadvantaged groups, and hence are an integral part of student experience.

Students undergoing great levels of stress may experience difficulty in managing the new community, individual, and educational demands of university, which may adversely impact their adjustment (Coffman & Gilligan, 2002). The ability to adjust therefore plays an important role in student success rates. Furthermore, Jacofsky (2018) makes reference to the student's ability to effectively respond to a stressor during their academic years, and in doing so resolving the source of stress in favour of long-term gratification. Students from previously disadvantaged groups attending historically "white" universities may encounter distinctive challenges that advantaged students do not face, such as underpreparedness and an inability to resolve sources of stress (Allen, 1992). These challenges often relate to inadequate primary and secondary schooling that did not provide the applicable academic skills or soft skills, such as an ability to respond to challenges (Henyeman & Loxley, 1983). Under-preparedness, in particular, has been related to amplified levels of stress when a student attempts to respond to a challenge such as succeeding in their studies at tertiary level (Shaikh et al., 2004; Urani, Miller, Johnson & Petzel, 2003). Another aspect that has been known to challenge students (in general) with amplified levels of stress is postgraduate studies (O'Donnell et al., 2009).

The transitioning process from undergraduate to postgraduate level requires students to make a shift from merely receiving and processing information to managing and applying educational information in a more critical and integrated manner (Tobbel, O'Donnell & Zammit, 2010). A British study reported that the transition from undergraduate to postgraduate level is characterised by difficulties in the mastery of vital skills or academic practices, signifying that postgraduate students do not arrive "equipped" for this higher educational level of studying (O'Donnell et al., 2009). It can be reasoned then that students who commence their studies on postgraduate level experience a mentally challenging year, as they may not be adequately prepared for the stresses they are likely to experience. In the field of psychology, in particular, a honours degree provides an essential bridge between the postgraduate

programme and several specialised master's programmes in the field of psychology throughout South Africa. Thus, although not all students utilise their honours degrees for professional training, those who wish to pursue careers as research, counselling or clinical psychologists require at least an honours degree in psychology in order to be eligible to apply for professional training (Haug, 2018; UWC, 2017). In addition to the mentioned obstacles faced by students in general, psychology students at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) from previously disadvantaged groups might require particular attention because of their added economic pressures.

In addition to the challenges students face to transition from undergraduate to postgraduate studies, they are also subjected to various influences and factors that may negatively or positively impact their academic careers. In the following section, the author will briefly explain the meaning, and contextualise the importance of interpersonal influences as contributing or damaging to the likelihood of success. Positive interpersonal factors, as described below, relate to relationships leading to the student feeling supported and able to overcome challenges surrounding research, evaluation, and social and family obligations. It would appear that, in contrast, a student who experiences a lack of support and motivation for their field of study would be much more likely to discontinue their studies.

## **2.2. Interpersonal influences during postgraduate studies**

Students require positive intrapersonal and interpersonal structures to enable them to be successful at postgraduate level (Albertyn, Kapp & Bitzer, 2008). A study at a Western Cape university examined groups of students who were enrolled, who had just graduated and who had adjourned their studies at the time of the research in order to determine the completion rates of postgraduate students and their expectations and experiences of postgraduate studies (Albertyn et al., 2008). The results outlined numerous reasons for successful studies, as well as challenging factors students experienced during their studies. Students who recounted positive relationships and interactions with faculty members, their supervisors and classmates during their studies tended to successfully complete their degrees (Albertyn et al., 2008). However, they reported challenging student experiences with regard to research methodology and the conceptualisation of their dissertations, management of their data and conducting data analysis. Students also reported on the importance and necessity that their supervisors had sufficient expertise in terms of valuable contribution and direction, monitoring of progress and recommendations about research methods. Findings further confirmed that, in addition to

research, students were mostly challenged by time management and receiving and understanding feedback. Supervisors that provided students with advice, encouragement and emotional support proved to be of great value to the students. On a personal level, the most difficult experiences during their studies included handling academic and personal responsibilities, self-doubting, and being generally fearful during the process. The students who terminated their studies reported feeling inept and isolated, experiencing the theory as overwhelming, difficulties in doing research, a lack of achievement, and having insufficient interest in their field of study. Students who successfully completed their studies reported experiencing the backing of significant others, their supervisors and their universities, as well as being driven and working hard (Albertyn et al., 2008).

The above research results seem to indicate that students who experience their emotional and educational environment as supportive, are not only able to tackle their studies with an approach that is conducive to successful completion of their goals, but can also minimise the internal and external strains associated with postgraduate studies. In terms of internal resources, it has been found that people with the ability to perceive and manage their own emotions and the emotions of others are better able to respond to environmental challenges and changes and also better able to elicit support from the environment. This ability to apply emotional perception can also be described as emotional intelligence, or EI (Sánchez-Ruiz, Pérez-González, Petrides, 2010).

A United Kingdom study on EI in students across five different university faculties aimed at understanding congruence between students' personalities and their chosen academic field found that congruence enables academic success and effective professional development (Sánchez- Ruiz et al., 2010). The implication for this is that EI equates to increased levels of congruence. The findings highlighted the implications of lecturers' desire to understand their students' personalities and environmental challenges to facilitate a mutually beneficial academic environment that increases student motivation and enhances the suitable development of effective approaches to training. This is considered to be specifically important for the context of this study, as many students enrolled at UWC are from groups with previously disadvantaged backgrounds.



### 2.3. Demographic influence on the likelihood of success in the South African context

Despite the abolishment of apartheid, “white” students still predominated master’s and PhD levels and “African” student enrolments remained weak even after 2000 (Cooper, 2015). While this racial terminology is still utilised, it does not imply inherent race differences but refers to a social construction that denotes aspects of certain differences. A study by Letseka (2007) emphasises the perpetuating cycle of economic disadvantage and academic underperformance that began during apartheid and still continues. In a cross-cultural study at a South African university, Myburgh (2005) found that the perceived barriers of school performance differed between races, as black students identified the cost of qualifying as the foremost factor, while Indian and white students indicated the toil of qualifying as a barrier. Nash (2006, p. 8) wrote:

What is certain is that those students from a working class background who do gain access to higher education will find themselves in an environment where the needs and values of their communities are alien. Their communities will become objects of knowledge but there will be no place for the idea of a university that empowers working class people or provides them with the skills and resources that enables them to challenge their subjugation themselves.

Therefore, it is apparent that socio-demographic factors such as financial restraints, crowded households and low-resourced communities impact on students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds. Meagre coping strategies may cause added strain on certain individuals, leading to destructive patterns of behaviour and diminished academic performance (Adams, 2016).

Students from a previously disadvantaged demographic face many challenges they have to overcome and cope with. The challenges surrounding gender further complicates a tertiary institution’s quest to promote academic advancement. Progress has been made in terms of gender equality in tertiary education settings, but remains a concern (Hyde, 2001). Females face varying challenges that impact adversely on academic advancement. These factors have been reported to be gender-based discrimination, unequal access to bursaries and work, and hardship in terms of family and relational obligations (Hyde, 2001). A statistical representation of these gender-based difficulties is reported in UNICEF’s (2016) report, *The State of the World’s Children*, which states that 29% of young females in sub-Saharan Africa are not enrolled in classes and 42% of those who enter the schooling system will advance to secondary

school. For females to make it to tertiary level education in a previously disadvantaged setting is challenging and requires developed coping skills and emotional intelligence.

An effective coping strategy is the mindful effort to reduce stress (Weiten & Lloyd, 2008). Psychological coping mechanisms are commonly termed coping strategies or coping skills. It can be argued that effective coping skills, coupled with high levels of EI, contribute to academic success. EI can be further described as an individual's ability to identify their own emotions and those of others, differentiate between different emotional states and label them appropriately (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Moreover, emotional information is employed to guide thinking and behaviour in order to manage emotions to successfully adapt to environments or attain goals. Therefore, the author of this study argues that effective coping skills and EI are of cardinal importance for academic success and for entering the professional realm of psychology.

#### **2.4. Coping as a key factor for success in tertiary education**

Central to personality factors that impact on students' well-being and educational success are coping skills. Psychologists Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman (1988) scientifically define coping as constantly changing cognitive and behavioural responses that attempt to manage taxing internal or external demands. Therefore, coping is an activity utilised to find solutions for stressful situations that are caused by our stressors (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980). Dealing with stress takes place in the form of either problem-focused strategies, which can be defined as the attempt to alter the source of stress in the person-environment relationship, or emotion-focused coping strategies, which attempt to decrease tense emotions (Kathryn, Suni & Siobhan, 2008).

Not coping with stressors may lead to a state of burnout in students and later on in the helping profession of psychology. Scholes (2008) elucidates that the potential impact burnout might have on decision-making and high-quality care calls for reinstating a mechanism of support to aid practitioners in coping with all the demands of contemporary health care. The chief practices regarding the concept of coping distinguish between two key styles. These include emotional-focused coping, which refers to cognitive strategies that delay solving the problem being faced or removing stress factors by reframing the issue at hand or avoiding the stress factor; and problem-focused coping, the purpose of which is to decrease burdens or increase stress management abilities (Billings & Moos, 1981; Zeidner & Endler, 1996).

More recently Roger, Jarvis and Najarian (1993) identified four coping strategies: logical, detached, emotional, and avoidant strategies. Logical coping employs problem-focused tactics; detached coping is an attitude based on removing oneself from the problem; and emotional coping focuses on reducing the potential influence of emotional impact. Logical and detached coping is largely considered as effective strategies, and emotional and avoidant styles as ineffective strategies. The different coping strategies can in general be viewed as a problem-focused approach versus an emotional-focused approach (Roger et al., 1993). In the context of this study, a student's ability to successfully negotiate the challenges associated with completing a higher qualification will be dependent, in part, on their coping strategy. Exploring the correlation between emotion- versus problem-focused coping and success could be valuable in growing an understanding of coping as a dimension of success at tertiary education levels and is therefore relevant to this study.

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1988), coping strategies can be further understood within the following eight categories: Confrontive Coping, Distancing, Self-controlling, Seeking Social Support, Accepting Responsibility, Escape-avoidance, Planful Problem Solving, and Positive Reappraisal. These eight categories of coping can be divided into two groups, namely effective (problem-focused) and ineffective (emotion-focused) coping strategies (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980).

Effective coping strategies improve functioning and long-term progression, while ineffective coping might merely reduce symptoms and lessen the likelihood of success within work-related contexts (Lazarus & Folkman, 1988). Coping strategies with relation to tertiary education would mean the difference between avoiding short-term discomforts, as opposed to absorbing such discomforts and effectively resolving the source of stress in favour of long-term gratification, which is in line with the definition of success provided by Jacofsky (2018), as outlined earlier in this literature review.

Given the inferences made by Jacofsky (2018), the importance of coping strategies can be assumed to be of relevance when students transition from high school to university, and from undergraduate courses to honours and master's degrees, as they are required to do to qualify as practising psychologists. An individual would need to negotiate various challenges in order to complete the coursework and the required thesis. The following sections will explore coping in terms of effective and ineffective coping and the probable impacts these strategies of coping may have on the likelihood of a student achieving success.

## 2.5. Ineffective coping strategies

Ineffective or emotional-focused strategies, as presented by the Ways of Coping Scale (WOCS) (Lazarus & Folkman, 1988), include Accepting Responsibility without the intention of solving the problem, Confrontive Coping, Distancing, Escape-avoidance, Positive Reappraisal as a means to distract, Self-controlling, and Seeking Social Support. In the context of a psychology student, these coping mechanisms could be employed to avoid or lessen the emotional impact of a stressor without the intention or ability to solve or overcome the challenge being faced (Carver, 2011). The following is an explanation of the above coping strategies and the effect they are hypothesised to have on a psychology student's likelihood of achieving success.

Accepting Responsibility as a coping strategy may be regarded as both effective and ineffective, depending on the time frame, as it could be detrimental in the long term if it is used because it has favourable short-term effects (Deasy, Coughlan, Pironom, Jourdan & Mannix-McNamara, 2014). This implies that if a student merely accepts responsibility for a mistake or failure but fails to take action when faced with the challenge, then the act of Accepting Responsibility could be regarded as an attempt to deflect attention away from themselves and perhaps the problem. This could be seen as a so-called "quick fix", as opposed to a long-term personal growth strategy. A "quick fix" could result in lessening immediate discomfort resulting from the stressor while failing to sufficiently address the concern in favour of long-term gain (Carver, 2011). This manner of coping could eventually result in a person criticising themselves and accepting that they had brought the problem onto themselves. It could also relate to promises being made to themselves that the situation would be perceived differently than past situations, and they would then try and make up for it (Lazarus & Folkman, 1988). The focus of coping in this way could therefore be to comfort the self rather than resolving the challenge in a constructive manner.

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1988), Confrontive Coping can be defined as damaging attempts at changing a situation or solving a problem. Such attempts would be combative by nature and would serve to provide a temporary reprieve from pent-up frustration with little to no benefit in terms of effectively addressing the problem at hand. This coping strategy would be consistent with an individual who stands their ground and attempts to change the minds of the persons/situations causing the challenge. Despite the fact that there is uncertainty as to whether the problem will be resolved, the focus might still largely be on

venting emotions and trying a solution-based approach, without an actual favourable outcome to the problem at hand.

Distancing, on the other hand, is a measure by which an individual attempts to remove themselves from a situation which is found to be stressful or challenging. If an individual distances themselves from a problematic situation, it can be assumed that the underlying concern or frustration would remain unaddressed and therefore prevent long-term success (Aspinwall & Taylor, 1992). Examples of Distancing could include a person approaching a challenge in a flippant manner or simply continuing as if nothing were wrong. Individuals who tend to distance themselves would further try to focus on the positive side of matters and typically attribute failure to bad luck. Distancing is thus relevant to achieving success and defined as an ineffective coping strategy, as the challenge being faced will most likely remain unresolved and could hamper the chances of success.

Lazarus and Folkman (1988) further describe a process of Escape-avoidance, whereby an individual would apply wishful thinking in order to lessen the impact of an external stressor. This implies that a student would simply wish the problem away to escape and avoid it, allowing themselves to detach emotionally without presenting a solution. Usual behaviours associated with Escape-avoidance are wishing for miracles or fantasising about how a situation might turn out. The person might typically turn to actions like sleeping, eating, drinking, smoking, taking drugs or using medication in order to escape the emotional impact of the trial being faced. Another noticeable component of Escape-avoidance behaviour is self-isolation, or the opposite: lashing out at those who try and assist. In either case the existence of the situation is avoided in an attempt to preserve the self, rather than to transcend the difficulty being encountered. These behaviours can impact negatively on a student's success, and hence were considered important for this study.

The coping strategy of Positive Reappraisal refers to a manner of coping whereby a person attempts to create a positive connotation by placing the focus on personal development, which could include a religious dimension. Positive Reappraisal behaviour could be described as a person stating "everything happens for a reason" or "God has a plan for me" (Hirsch, Barlem, Edison, Almeida, Tomaschewski-Barlem, Figueira & Lunardi, 2015). Either of these statements would serve to alleviate the stress accompanying the challenge being faced, but might in itself not bring the person any closer to a workable solution directed at long-term success. For example, with postgraduate studies, a student might rely on their religion or look

for the silver lining in order to alleviate the distress of pressing deadlines or academic failure, but it will not bring them closer to a tangible, workable solution.

Self-controlling as a means of coping refers to mechanisms applied to control feelings and activities. Such actions could include meditating, breathing exercises and other means of managing the physical effects of stress. Lazarus and Folkman (1988) observed these behaviours when individuals attempt to keep emotions to themselves in order to withhold the extent to which they are struggling to overcome the subjective threat. Impulsivity is another behaviour component of Self-controlling, accompanied by continuous rumination. Self-controlling is subsequently an applied manner of coping focused on making it look like the person is coping while they are not practically addressing the issue at hand. A student might apply effective Self-controlling in managing the symptoms of stress but would fail to address the source of the stress. In this case, they might appear calm and contained, while not addressing the factor/s underlying their experienced pressure.

Individuals might use the coping strategy of Seeking Social Support in order to diminish the effects of challenges faced (Carver, 2011). Ineffective social support is described as talking about how one is feeling and accepting sympathy and understanding from others. The goal with this strategy or technique is to find comfort in others while not confronting the task in an effective manner. This strategy might be applicable to postgraduate students who, for example, form study groups to cope with the anxiety the level of independent work causes.

In evaluating the coping strategies above, it can be seen that the focus of each lies in the effort to lessen the emotional burden placed on the self while facing adversity. Lazarus and Folkman (1988) found that ineffective coping strategies could lead to increased incidences of depression and anxiety, or people surrendering control over a situation in favour of emotional comfort or short-term absolution. A student aiming to qualify as a psychologist faces many challenges, including, but not limited to, funding, social, academic, relational and family challenges. If a psychology student cannot manage to cope with these challenges effectively by addressing and managing their emotional well-being, then the chances of achieving success could be assumed to diminish significantly due to a decline in mental health and insufficient skills development.

## **2.6. Effective coping strategies**

In order to effectively cope with a challenge, a person would be expected to identify the source of the problem being faced and to address it. This would include a process of

gathering information on the problem, followed by a process of skills acquisition focused on overcoming the challenge at hand. This process of continuous adaptation to the context is critical for a student studying to become a psychologist, given the academic and demographic challenges referred to in this study.

Lazarus and Folkman (1988) define Planful Problem Solving as careful problem-focused manoeuvres accompanied by analytic strategies to alter the situation in a favourable manner. A person applying Planful Problem Solving as a coping strategy could be expected to identify the variables of a problem and to proactively solve the aspects which are within their control. Planful Problem Solving also results from a reflective approach where a person relies on past experiences and skills acquired in order to overcome difficulties that are similar in nature. When an aspect of a problem is deemed to be beyond one's control, efforts would be made to bring about change in the context of the problem by identifying assets in one's network that could assist. This process could include Seeking Social Support in order to gather information about the problem from an external source, which would result in informed decision-making. Seeking Social Support could therefore be regarded as an effective contributing coping strategy when applied with the intention of gathering information or identifying a person who could help solve the problem in a concrete goal-directed manner (Stephenson, King & DeLongis, 2016).

The manner in which a person approaches a problem that causes them stress and/or anxiety determines whether they effectively overcome challenges or not. When a person places their focus on lessening the immediate discomfort from an emotional perspective, it can be assumed that the problem being faced will remain unsolved. In contrast, if a person applies effective coping strategies and attempts to solve the problem in a clear and logical manner while expanding their skills base, then they will not only solve the problem, but will also enable themselves to better deal with similar challenges in future and increase their likelihood of achieving success.

For a student to improve their likelihood of success, they must be able to effectively manage their emotions and therefore cope under stress. In the following section, the author describes the importance of EI in relation to a person's ability to apply effective coping strategies.

## 2.7. Emotional intelligence and internal resources

Salovey and Mayer (1990, p. 189) propose that EI can be defined as “the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions”. According to Kaplan & Sadock (2015), social intelligence and EI can be defined as accurate cognisant perception and monitoring of one’s emotions; accurate acknowledgement of, and responses to emotions in others; the ability to self-soothe one’s experienced anxiety and rationalising of hope; skilfully negotiating intimate relationships, and focusing one’s motivations towards explicit goals by delaying instant gratification and managing impulses appropriately.

High EI can be described as above-average mental health in the same way that a high intelligence quotient (IQ) equates to an individual with above-average intellectual aptitude (Sadock & Sadock, 2015). Mayer and Salovey (1997) identify four features of EI:

- Emotional understanding, which entails the capacity to verbally label emotions and to apprehend how emotions can vary
- Emotional management, which refers to the skill of using emotions for both emotional and individual development
- Emotional perception, denoting the skill to recognise and to express emotional states
- Emotional facilitation, referring to the ability to utilise emotion to enable cognitive actions

Numerous methods in which EI might be associated with health behaviours can be identified, and have been a growing interest in research. Thus, associations of EI with health and well-being encompass individual differences in emotional capabilities. This includes both intrapersonal (e.g. stress and emotional management) and interpersonal (e.g. perceiving emotions and managing communication styles) aspects of the concept. Interpersonal EI would be expected to lead to better collaborations with health professionals and the ability to communicate effectively, and thus to a better propensity to seek support and follow expert recommendations (Ciarrochi & Deane, 2001).

Generally, seven emotions can be identified in facial expressions, which assist in our basic survival. These are anger, fear, excitement, aversion, curiosity, surprise and melancholy. It seems beneficial to our functioning to be able to identify these emotions in ourselves and others in order to be more responsive and better emotionally adjusted in society (Kaplan &



Sadock, 2015). EI is about being mindful of what you are feeling and being able to hold those feelings without having them consume you; being able to motivate yourself to get jobs done; being resourceful and performing optimally; and recognising others' feelings, and managing relationships well (Singh, 2008). Ongoing research provides evidence that EI has strong associations with a variety of outcomes that pertain to well-being, advanced self-esteem, social engagement, increased positive effects, academic performance, career satisfaction, self-efficacy and greater life satisfaction (Kafetsios & Zampetakis, 2008; Zeidner, Matthews & Roberts, 2009; Zeidner & Shemesh, 2010). Therefore, it can be argued that psychology students ought to have high EI levels in order to be better equipped to complete their studies with minimal negative social, emotional and educational impact.

Kaplan and Sadock (2015) highlight how EI has employed a particular focus on understanding the relationship between EI and positive mental health and the means of measuring it. In order for EI to be operationalised as true intelligence tests, there must be more or less correct answers when the construct is being tested. For example, if an individual is asked, "which two emotional experiences might blend together in the feeling of contempt?", some of the possible answers (such as anger and disgust) must be better than others (such as joy and challenge) (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2004). The majority of the group should share their understanding of the meaning of most of these answers, and if a person chooses an option chosen by 75% of the group, the person's score is incremented by 0.75. Research has shown that EI forecasts important areas such as academic performance, job performance, negotiation, leadership, emotional labour, reliance, work-family conflict, and tension (Côté & Miners, 2006; Fulmer & Barry, 2004; Humphrey, 2002, 2006; Humphrey, Pollack & Hawver, 2008).

Students' successful academic performance depends on adherence to these criteria, as it has been shown that achievement emotions affect how health care learners identify, distinguish, interpret and act on information (Artino, La Rochelle & Durning, 2010; McConnell & Eva, 2012). It is thus clear that when EI is not adequately developed, students will face challenges in coping with their academic responsibilities. Therefore, it can be argued that student appraisals of those who do not hold adequate levels of EI could be negative. Having the ability or having developed the ability to manage one's emotions according the parameters mentioned in this paragraph would result in higher EI, contributing to one's coping strategies and, ultimately, success.

## **2.8. The relationship between coping and EI**

EI has aspects which relate to coping (Salovey, Rothman, Detweiler & Steward, 2000). Literature on correlations between EI and coping is relatively scarce, but studies have reported that EI is positively linked with task-focused coping and negatively associated with emotion-focused coping (Bar-On, 1997; Saklofske, Austin, Mastoras, Beaton & Osborne, 2012). Noorbakhsh et al. (2010) indicate that EI predicts changes related to the tactics of stress control. A study conducted by Gawali (2012), showed that higher EI could enable school teachers to be more effective in their occupation, as they would have improved abilities to cope with demanding circumstances in the workplace, as well as in their personal lives. The function of EI as a positive coping resource in health and other environments appears to be an essential topic for additional research.

## **2.9. The relationship between coping, EI and academic success**

Few studies have attempted to investigate the relationship between academic success, and emotional and social competencies. A study by Thomas, Cassady and Heller (2017) found that students with high levels of EI achieved advanced heights of academic performance during their time in academia. This finding reflects the results of earlier research that EI influences students' lasting academic achievement (Fernández, Salamonson & Griffiths, 2012; Jaeger & Eagan, 2007). Studies conducted by MacCann, Fogarty, Zeidner and Roberts (2011) suggest that emotional management (high levels of emotional facilitation, understanding and management) appears to be of greater importance for academic success than emotional perception (emotion-focused coping). Additionally, it appears that coping facilitates the link between emotional management and academic success.

Collectively, these results have significant implications for Psychology educational programmes. Parker, Summerfeldt, Hogan and Majeski (2004) conclude that numerous areas of emotional intelligence – such as intrapersonal characteristics, stress management, and adaptability – are important predictors of academic success. Coping efficiently with studying on a postgraduate level, with the increased pressure of both academic performance and selection processes, may prove to be tough to cope with. Moreover, managing the pressures related to the profession of the psychologist also requires adequate levels of coping. Effective coping levels allow the student and/or psychologist to maintain higher levels of physical and mental health (Dattilio, 2015; D'Souza, Egan & Rees, 2011; Jordaan, Spangenberg, Watson & Fouche, 2007). Research shows that highly proficient individuals use more sufficient coping

strategies than their lower-performing counterparts (Barriga et al., 2002; Garber & Little, 1999). It can be argued that proficiency is a skill affected by the context of an individual's background.

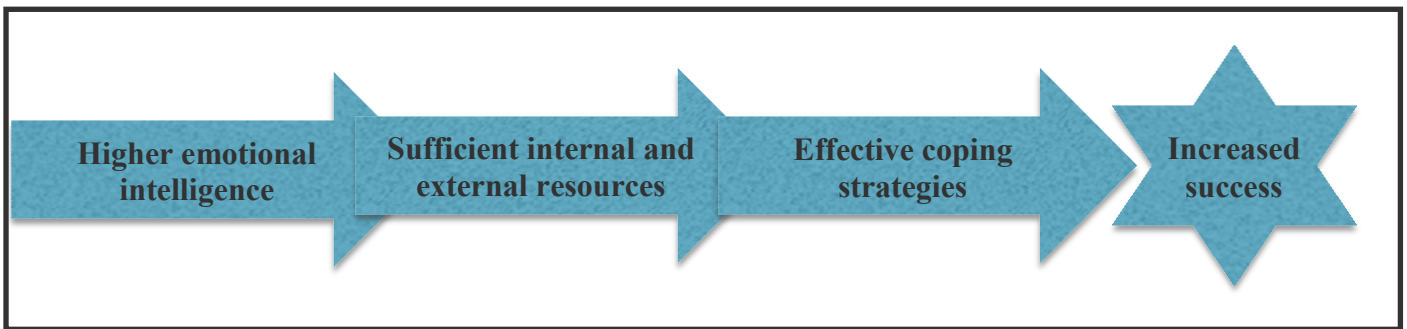
## **2.10. The relationship between coping, EI, academic success and demographic factors**

Literature on the relationship between coping, EI, academic success and demographic factors is scarce. According to Huysamen and Raubenheimer (1999), scholastically disadvantaged students appear to encounter excessive difficulty in coping with academic expectancies when joining a university. It is crucial for disadvantaged citizens to be offered a fair process and guidance for postgraduate studies. According to Majumdar and Cuttress (1999), it is equally important to mould professional and effective students through culturally sensitive programmes in order to enhance both the knowledge and skills of prospective health care professionals. Many disadvantaged South African students are first-generation graduates, and the associated potential impacts require attention and research. Research demonstrates that economically and scholastically disadvantaged students are predominantly susceptible to adjustment problems in transitioning from school to institutions of higher education (e.g. Sennett, 2003).

One study showed that gender, and not age, was associated with both EI and coping strategies to a large extent (Alumran & Punamäki, 2008). This study concluded that females exhibited higher interpersonal intelligence, but no gender variances were found in other dimensions of EI. A discrepancy was highlighted: although females possessed high social intelligence and the ability to manage challenges, they resorted to self-blaming, using wishful thinking, withdrawing and crying when faced with stress (Alumran & Punamäki, 2008). These are considered to be ineffective coping strategies. This may possibly be explained by the tendency of males to be more occupied with stress about finance and work, whereas females experience more stress about family and health-related events (Matud, 2004). Therefore, it appears that women, in particular, experience increased emotional responses to interpersonal challenges, impacting negatively on their coping abilities.

## **2.11. The relationship between success, coping and emotional intelligence**

From the above discussions on success, coping and EI, the preliminary conceptual framework depicted in Figure 1 was compiled for this study.



*Figure 1: A conceptual depiction of the correlation between EI, internal and external resources, and coping strategies as related to success for the purposes of this study*

While the model is depicted as linear for clarity, the relationship is complex and multidimensional. Alongside coping strategies, adequate levels of EI are crucial and beneficial qualities for postgraduate psychology students and psychologists to hold, as these skills include empathy, the ability to solve problems, optimism, and self-awareness (Cherry, Fletcher, O’Sullivan & Dornan, 2014). Dattilio (2015) maintains that mental health professionals who can purposefully function in agreement with their life principles and who can redirect views and emotions in dealing with psychosocial stressors, are better equipped to cope and solidify their life fulfilment. This can be seen as a successful EI strategy that only certain individuals possess.

Research on psychology students is limited, particularly with regard to EI and coping levels during postgraduate training. One study, focusing on male honours psychology students at the University of Witwatersrand, highlighted that these students’ life struggles underpinned their empathy development and therefore informed the characteristics they held, which had elements of the “wounded-healer” model (Townsend, 2013). Jung, Read, Fordham and Adler (1953, pp. 115–116) point out that:

Freud himself accepted my suggestion that every doctor should submit to a training analysis before interesting himself in the unconscious of his patients for therapeutic purposes. We could say, without too much exaggeration, that about half of every treatment that probes at all consists of the doctor’s examining himself, for only what he can put right in himself can he hope to put right in the patient. This, and nothing else, is the meaning of the Greek myth of the wounded physician.

This highlights that students in the field of psychology often go through introspection of the self, which may be challenging and painful at times. Research confirms that psychology

students tend to have broadly established self-knowledge, as they have a greater understanding of dimensions of personality than students in non-psychology fields (Baluch, Martin, Christian & Corulla, 1996). Although this indicates a promising aspect of psychology students, it is equally important to consider what the actual experiences are in terms of levels of EI and coping in students and whether students are indeed adequately equipped for optimal functioning during their honours year in psychology.

## **2.12. Theoretical framework that underpins the study**

Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory provided the framework for this study (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner's theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Ryan, 2001) explains complex "layers" of the environment, having an effect on a person's development. These layers include the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. The first refers to the institutions and groups that most immediately and directly impact the individual's development, including their families, schools, religious institutions, neighbourhoods and peers. The second refers to interconnections between the microsystems. The third comprises interactions between a social setting in which the individual does not have an active role and the individual's direct environment. The macrosystem defines the culture in which individuals live. Finally, the chronosystem refers to the patterning of environmental events and transitions, as well as sociohistorical conditions. The theory maintains that interaction among elements in the individual's development biology, their immediate family/community environment, and the societal context navigates their development. Changes or conflict in any layer will affect other layers. Therefore, to understand an individual's development, we must consider not only the person's immediate environment, but also the interaction with the larger environment. In the context of this study, the environment or context which an individual stems from could impact the development of their EI, internal and external resources, and their coping strategies, as discussed in the literature review.

While systems theory is helpful for the broader context, this needs to be complemented by theories of coping. Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Transactional Model of Stress and Coping Theory provided the framework for the present study. The theory assisted in formulating and testing conceptions about the stress process and its impact on physical and mental health. The Stress and Coping Theory is based on the hypothesis that stress is a person-situation interaction that relies upon the relationship between the person and environment,

resulting in an individual's subjective judgment (Zakowski, Hall, Klein & Baum, 2001). This theory provides a framework that may inform how the educational environment can impact on student experiences, their coping and success. The framework underscores the significance of two processes: appraisal and coping. These processes are believed to serve as facilitators of the unceasing relationship between the person and the environment. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) suggest that coping will be most effective if the appropriate form of coping is applied to the relevant stressor confronting the individual.

This theoretical framework was appropriate to inform the understanding of the variables being investigated, and served as a framework for understanding academic success. Academic outcomes are determined by students experiencing academic, personal or systematic changes at the individual level to the extent to which they can cope with these challenges. Students' appraisal of stressors and the coping behaviour that follows will therefore determine coping levels according to this factor. Within this model, coping could therefore be affected by multiple variables, including demographic factors and EI, the latter being central to both appraisal and coping.



## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Aim of the study

The aim of the study was to explore coping and EI among psychology students studying at the University of the Western Cape.

#### 3.2. Objectives of the study

To determine the relationship between selected demographic factors, emotional intelligence and coping in a sample of psychology students at the University of the Western Cape.

#### 3.3. Research design and setting

The study adopted a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional survey design. The research was conducted by using a questionnaire and two scales measuring coping and EI levels, respectively, thus obtaining data on attitudes, perceptions and behaviours. The advantage of this approach is that the design is appropriate to reach the aims of the research by utilising computer technology for scoring, minimising costs, and by enabling rapid completion and provision of accurate information in order to assess the dynamics of the variables at hand (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). The disadvantages of survey research include the possibility of significant response bias, incomplete questionnaires and lack of observation with regard to respondents' responses towards the questions and the research setting (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). The target population was psychology students, with a particular focus on the third-year and honours psychology cohort in the Department of Psychology at the University of the Western Cape.

##### 3.3.1. Sampling method

This study employed a purposive, convenience sampling method. Data derived from purposive sampling's interpretation of results is restricted to the population under study and represents type in relation to key criterion (Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2013). The key population was psychology students, specifically third-year and honours students who were enrolled in psychology at UWC at the time of the study. These students are particularly distinctive, as many are faced with dual selection processes prior and during their honours year, should they aspire towards furthering their studies in psychology. Convenience sampling is most

commonly used in research where participants meet the inclusion criteria for the study. It entails the selection of individuals on the premise of their accessibility and readiness to respond (Gravetter & Forzano, 2012). The advantages of this method are that it is cost-effective, and a description of all the population elements are not required. Its limitations include that variability and bias cannot be measured or controlled, and results from the data cannot be generalised beyond the sample (Acharya, Prakash, Saxena & Nigam, 2013).

### **3.3.2. Data collection procedure**

The third-year and honours psychology cohort of The University of the Western Cape was approached and the purpose of the study was explained. Once information sheets, agreement and informed consent had been completed, data collection commenced. After ethical clearance had been granted, data was collected by administering psychological assessment measures and a demographic questionnaire by the researcher. The researcher explained the administering of all assessment measures and how each measurement measured one of the variables identified in the study. These assessments and questionnaires were distributed to participants and successively collected by the researcher after a few days. The researcher aimed to obtain a 90% response rate from the sample. To increase the response rate and allow students adequate time to complete the questionnaires, data collection was conducted on a face-to-face basis, and not electronically, and contact with classes were spread over four structured classes (with data collection taking place after these classes). Two data collections took place in 2017 and two in 2018. The researcher aimed to collect a total of 200 questionnaires. However, it must be noted that an accurate record was not kept of which respondents were third-year or honours students, and therefore it was not possible to determine the relative proportion. Because data was collected twice from honours students, the majority of the data was from this group. The purpose was to identify a sufficient number of students who might wish to pursue careers in research, or clinical or counselling psychology from the third-year and honours group. There were approximately 150 applicants for the UWC honours, the majority of whom wanted to pursue careers in research, or clinical or counselling psychology.

## **3.4. Instruments**

### **3.4.1. Demographic questionnaire (DQ) (Appendix A)**

This self-constructed and developed questionnaire requested participants to report demographic information, such as gender, race, age, whether they had decided on furthering a



career in psychology, whether they had planned to apply for selection to the psychology honours, the number of years they had attempted to get selected for the honours course, the method of funding their studies, and their future academic/career goals.

### **3.4.2. The Ways of Coping Scale (Appendix B)**

The Ways of Coping Scale (WOCS) comprises a 66-item self-report instrument that requests respondents to recall a recent stressor and then rate how frequently they have used 66 different behaviours to cope with that particular stressor. The scale contains various thoughts and actions that individuals employ to deal with the internal and/or external stresses of specific demanding situations. Typically the situation is defined by the participant in a brief written description outlining who was involved, where it took place and what happened (Rexrode, Petersen & O'Toole, 2008). A four-point Likert scale (0 = not used; 1 = used somewhat; 2 = used quite a bit; 3 = used a great deal) was utilised to indicate each participant's experiences. Typical reliability across subscale scores was found to be as high as 0.75 and 0.87 in various studies (Budge, et al., 2013; Rexrode et al., 2008). The scale is grouped in problem-focused and emotion-focused categories. Problem-focused strategies are adaptive strategies that comprise managing or altering the problem or the situation, while emotion-focused strategies include regulating the emotive reaction to the problem. Individuals may use both styles of approaches to deal with stressors in their environment (Lazarus & Folkman, 1988). Scale scores are additively derivative from individual items and divided by a total score to provide relative scores for a total of eight scales: Confrontative Coping, Accepting Responsibility, Distancing, Escape-avoidance, Planful Problem Solving, Positive Reappraisal, Self-controlling and Seeking Social Support. These eight scales use a total of 50 of the total 66 items available (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988).

### **3.4.3. The Assessing Emotions Scale (Appendix C)**

The Assessing Emotions Scale (AES) comprises a 33-item self-report inventory. This model suggests that EI consists of the evaluation of emotion in the self and others, identifications and expression of emotion, regulation of emotion in the self and others, and application of emotion in resolving difficulties (Cho, Drasgow & Cao, 2015). Respondents rated themselves on the items using a five-point scale. The scale assesses four facets of EI: appraisal of emotions (AOE: "I am aware of the non-verbal messages I send to others"), use of emotions (UE: "When I am in a positive mood, solving problems is easy for me"), mood regulations/optimism (MR: "I expect good things to happen"), and social skills (SS: "I arrange

events others enjoy”) (Saklofske, Austin & Minski, 2003). In previous research, Schutte, Malouff and Bhullar (2009) found the internal consistency, as measured by Cronbach’s alpha, to be 0.90 and a two week test-retest reliability coefficient to be 0.78.

#### **3.4.4. Validity of scales**

The instruments used in this study are not normed for the South African population. Despite this, the WOCS and AES can be used in diverse groups (Vitaliano et al., 1985; Schutte et al., 2009). The scales are considered to be reliable for the sample, as their education levels and language proficiency are considered to be adequate and do not pose barriers to results yielded. This was pertinent, given that the final sample consisted only of psychology honours students. Equally, experiences in EI and coping are considered to be similar in those for whom the instruments were normed. Cronbach alphas were employed to ascertain reliability.

#### **3.5. Data analysis**

The data was tabulated and analysed using the Statistical Software Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) (IBM, 2015). Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed. Descriptive statistics were employed to determine constructs such as means, frequencies and standard deviations, while inferential statistics were used to establish the potential relationships between the variables (Kabacoff, 2015). For the WOCS, correlations were also done for the eight subscales. For research question one, a correlation was done between EI and coping. For research question two, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was done. Finally, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was done for research question three.

First, SPSS was used to obtain descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients for the DQ, the AES, and the WOCS. Second, with regard to the one-way interrelationships between variables, correlation analyses were performed for continuous variables, and ANOVA for variables with more than two categories. Relationships explored in these analyses included the relationship between demographic factors and levels of coping, the levels of EI associated with levels of coping, and the relationship between demographic (gender and the wish to continue with a master’s in psychology) and outcome variables.

#### **3.6. Ethics**

The researcher obtained ethics clearance from the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee, and thereafter to the Senate Higher Degrees Committee to conduct the study. Thereafter, permission to conduct the study at UWC was obtained from the Office of the Registrar and the

Dean of the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences. Subsequently, a letter describing the purpose of the study and a letter of consent were sent to the Head of Department and Course Coordinator of the Honours Psychology Programme. Once permission had been obtained from the relevant stakeholders, an information sheet (Appendix B) was prepared and provided to all participants. It comprised a brief background of the study, the aims and objectives of the study, an outline of the participants' rights, as well as the names of persons to contact in the event of debriefing, if desired. It was also explained to participants that the outcomes of the study would be made available in a published thesis, a conference presentation and an article submitted to a journal for publication. In addition, participants were requested to complete a consent form (Appendix C), which specified that participation was voluntary, that the identity of participants would be kept anonymous and that confidentiality would be respected. Participants were assured that, should they want to opt out of the study at any given time, there would be no consequences or questions asked in relation to this decision. Participants were notified that counselling and/or debriefing sessions would be made available to those who would require it. Finally, the researcher ensured that all documentation collected from the sample was safely and securely stored, as this information is of a sensitive and confidential nature.



## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

The aim of this study was to explore a relationship between selected demographic factors, coping and emotional intelligence in psychology students at the University of the Western Cape. The results are reported according to the research questions formulated for the study. This chapter provides the results that originated from the research methods described in the previous chapter. First, the descriptive statistics for the dependent and independent variable(s) are given. Second, the internal consistencies for the AES and the WOCS are presented. Subsequently, the results of the Pearson's product-moment correlation and standard means and deviations are presented. Finally, the ANOVA and MANOVA results are presented.

In 2012, UWC's student population consisted of 46.2% Coloureds, 42.4% blacks, 5.3% Indians, 4.7% whites and 1.1% people of other races. In 2015, an increase in white students (5.5%) and a decrease in Indian students (4.7%) were noted, with the other groups remaining mainly unchanged (Coloured: 46.1%, black: 42.5% and others: 1%) (Banda & Peck, 2016). The sample for this study consisted of 114 psychology 3<sup>rd</sup> year and honours students, which included 87 female and 27 males. Of these 114 respondents, 78 were Coloured, 24 were blacks, eight were white, and four were Indian individuals.

#### 4.1. Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics for the dependent variables and independent variables will be discussed next. The sample characteristics were calculated and are presented in Table 1. The means and standard deviations (SD) are displayed in Table 2.

##### 4.1.1. Sample characteristics

The demographic characteristics of participants are displayed in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Demographic characteristics of participants**

Characteristic	Items (N)	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	87	76.3
Male	27	23.7
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Black	24	21.1
Coloured	78	68.4
Indian	4	3.5
White	8	7.0
<b>Intending to continue with master's</b>		
Yes	92	80.7
No	21	18.4
Absent	1	0.9
Data		
<b>Employed while studying</b>	51	44.7
Yes	62	54.4
No		
<b>Students with bursaries</b>	26	22.8
Yes	88	77.2
No		

Table 1 indicates that most of the participants were female (76.3%), versus males, who comprised 23.7% of the sample. The sample consisted mainly of Coloured (68.4%) individuals, followed by Black (21.1%), White (7%), and Indian (3.5%) individuals. In terms of those aspiring to study towards a master's degree in psychology, the majority were interested (80.7%), a small portion were not interested (18.4%) and participant was unsure (0.9%). With regard to those working while studying, less than half the sample size were gainfully employed and studying (44.7%), while more than half were not (54.4%). With regard to those having received bursaries for their studies, only a minority (22.8%) had bursaries, while the majority (77.2%) did not.

#### 4.1.2. Means and standard deviations

This subsection identifies means and standard deviations for the AES and WOCS scores, respectively. The statistics are presented in Table 2. For the WOCS, the means and standard deviations are reported for each of the subscales.

**Table 2: Means and standard deviations on the AES and WOCS (N=114)**

Measure	N	Minimum value	Maximum value	Mean	Standard deviation
<b>AES</b>	114	74	162	123.32	17.14
<b>WOCS</b>	114				
Confrontive Coping		1	17	8.4	3.50
Distancing		1	17	8.66	3.73
Self-controlling		0	18	9.20	3.67
Seeking Social Support		1	32	10.24	4.44
Accepting Responsibility		0	12	6.54	2.63
Escape-avoidance		0	24	10.14	5.67
Planful Problem Solving		1	18	11.24	3.75
Positive Reappraisal		1	21	12.40	5.53



The results in Table 2 indicate that the average respondent presented with an AES score of 123.32 (SD = 17.14). On the WOCS, the mean score for Confrontive Coping was 8.4 (SD = 3.50), the mean for Distancing measured at 8.66 (SD = 3.73), and on the Self-controlling subscale the mean was 9.20 (SD = 3.67). The mean for respondents' scores on Seeking Social Support was 10.24 (SD = 4.44). For the subscale Accepting Responsibility, the mean was 6.54 (SD = 2.63), and the mean for Escape-avoidance was 10.14 (SD = 5.67). The mean score for Planful Problem Solving was 11.24 (SD = 3.75). The subscale Positive Reappraisal had a mean of 12.40 (SD = 5.53).

#### 4.2. Internal consistency and measuring of scales

Using Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) as the reliability coefficient, this section reports on the results of the internal consistency of the two measuring scales (AES and WOCS). The results are displayed in Table 3 and Table 4, respectively. Correlations were also run for all eight

subscales in order to determine possible relationships between coping strategies, given that the WOCS consists of eight subscales rather than a sample score.

#### 4.2.1. Emotional intelligence

The internal consistency for the reliability coefficient for the AES in this study was determined for the full scale and can be seen in Table 3.

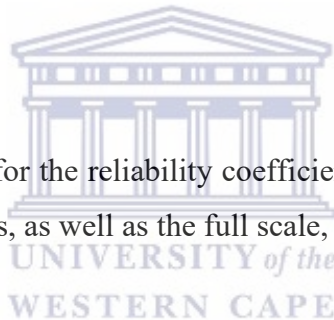
**Table 3: Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the AES**

Scale	Items (N)	Cronbach's $\alpha$
AES	33	0.696

It is evident from Table 3 that the internal consistency for the reliability coefficient for the AES in this study generated a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.70. A reliability coefficient of 0.7 to 0.8 was used as a measure for a satisfactory value for the Cronbach alpha (Field, 2009).

#### 4.2.2. Ways of coping

The internal consistency for the reliability coefficient of the WOCS in this study was determined for the eight subscales, as well as the full scale, and is shown in Table 4.



**Table 4: Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the WOCS**

Scale	Items (N)	Cronbach's $\alpha$
WOCS	66	0.905
Confrontive Coping	6	0.558
Distancing	6	0.620
Self-controlling	6	0.556
Seeking Social Support	6	0.547
Accepting Responsibility	4	0.438
Escape-avoidance	8	0.773
Planful Problem Solving	6	0.721
Positive Reappraisal	7	0.828

The internal consistency of the reliability coefficient for the WOCS in this study was determined for the eight subscales, as well as the full scale. There was variation in the Cronbach alpha across the scales, ranging from a low of 0.44 to a high of 0.90. The Confrontive Coping subscale yielded a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.56, the Distancing subscale 0.62, the Self-controlling subscale 0.56, the Seeking Social Support subscale 0.55, the Accepting Responsibility subscale 0.44, the Escape-avoidance subscale 0.77, the Planful Problem Solving subscale 0.72, and the Positive Reappraisal subscale yielded a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.83. The overall Cronbach's alpha for the WOCS scale was calculated because of the low Cronbach's alpha for scales 1 to 5. The reliability coefficient for the WOCS full scale is 0.91. A 0.70 Cronbach  $\alpha$  is considered satisfactory, and only the Escape-avoidance, Planful Problem Solving and Positive Reappraisal subscales fell in this range.



**Table 5: Internal WOCS scale correlations**

		Total AES	Confrontive Coping	Distancing	Self-controlling	Seeking Social Support	Accepting Responsibility	Escape-avoidance	Planful Problem Solving	Positive Reappraisal
<b>Confrontive Coping</b>	Pearson correlation	.083	1	.357**	.277**	.361**	.281**	.463**	.208*	.282**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.377		.000	.003	.000	.002	.000	.026	.002
	N	114	114	114	114	114	114	114	114	114
<b>Distancing</b>	Pearson correlation	.031	.357**	1	.416**	.220*	.312**	.311**	.215*	.447**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.742	.000		.000	.019	.001	.001	.022	.000
	N	114	114	114	114	114	114	114	114	114
<b>Self-controlling</b>	Pearson correlation	.034	.277**	.416**	1	.191*	.452**	.382**	.305**	.427**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.721	.003	.000		.041	.000	.000	.001	.000
	N	114	114	114	114	114	114	114	114	114
<b>Seeking Social Support</b>	Pearson correlation	.138	.361**	.220*	.191*	1	.270**	.158	.393**	.437**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.143	.000	.019	.041		.004	.093	.000	.000
	N	114	114	114	114	114	114	114	114	114
<b>Accepting Responsibility</b>	Pearson correlation	-.069	.281**	.312**	.452**	.270**	1	.329**	.391**	.529**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.466	.002	.001	.000	.004		.000	.000	.000
	N	114	114	114	114	114	114	114	114	114
<b>Escape-avoidance</b>	Pearson correlation	-.053	.463**	.311**	.382**	.158	.329**	1	-.055	.118
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.574	.000	.001	.000	.093	.000		.559	.211
	N	114	114	114	114	114	114	114	114	114

		Total AES	Confrontive Coping	Distancing	Self-controlling	Seeking Social Support	Accepting Responsibility	Escape-avoidance	Planful Problem Solving	Positive Reappraisal
<b>Planful Problem Solving</b>	Pearson correlation	.052	<b>.208*</b>	<b>.215*</b>	<b>.305**</b>	<b>.393**</b>	<b>.391**</b>	-.055	1	<b>.603**</b>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.586	.026	.022	.001	.000	.000	.559		.000
	N	114	114	114	114	114	114	114	114	114
<b>Positive Reappraisal</b>	Pearson correlation	.146	<b>.282**</b>	<b>.447**</b>	<b>.427**</b>	<b>.437**</b>	<b>.529**</b>	.118	<b>.603**</b>	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.121	.002	.000	.000	.000	.000	.211	.000	
	N	114	114	114	114	114	114	114	114	114

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

In order to determine possible relationships between coping strategies, correlations were formulated for all eight subscales within the WOCS contained in Table 5. The strongest correlations were found between the following subscales:

- A positive relationship between Positive Reappraisal and Planful Problem Solving ( $r^2 = 0.60$ ,  $p = 0.000$ )
- A positive relationship between Positive Reappraisal and Accepting Responsibility ( $r^2 = 0.53$ ,  $p = 0.000$ )
- A positive relationship between Confrontive Coping and Escape Avoidance ( $r^2 = 0.46$ ,  $p = 0.000$ )
- A positive relationship between Accepting Responsibility and Self-Controlling ( $r^2 = 0.45$ ,  $p = 0.000$ )
- A positive relationship between Positive Reappraisal and Distancing ( $r^2 = 0.45$ ,  $p = 0.000$ )
- A positive relationship between Positive Reappraisal and Seeking Social Support ( $r^2 = 0.44$ ,  $p = 0.000$ )
- A positive relationship between Positive Reappraisal and Self-Controlling ( $r^2 = 0.43$ ,  $p = 0.000$ )
- A positive relationship between Distancing and Self-Controlling ( $r^2 = 0.42$ ,  $p = 0.000$ )

Fairly strong correlations were found between the following subscales:

- A positive relationship between Seeking Social Support and Planful Problem Solving ( $r^2 = 0.393$ ,  $p = 0.000$ )
- A positive relationship between Accepting Responsibility and Planful Problem Solving ( $r^2 = 0.39$ ,  $p = 0.000$ )
- A positive relationship between Self-Controlling and Escape Avoidance ( $r^2 = 0.38$ ,  $p = 0.000$ )
- A positive relationship between Confrontive Coping and Seeking Social Support ( $r^2 = 0.36$ ,  $p = 0.000$ )
- A positive relationship between Confrontive Coping and Distancing ( $r^2 = 0.36$ ,  $p = 0.000$ )
- A positive relationship between Accepting Responsibility and Escape Avoidance ( $r^2 = 0.33$ ,  $p = 0.000$ )

- A positive relationship between Accepting Responsibility and Distancing ( $r^2 = 0.31, p = 0.001$ )
- A positive relationship between Escape Avoidance and Distancing ( $r^2 = 0.31, p = 0.001$ )
- A positive relationship between Self-Controlling and Planful Problem Solving ( $r^2 = 0.31, p = 0.001$ )

Weak correlations were found between the following subscales:

- A positive relationship between Confrontive Coping and Positive Reappraisal ( $r^2 = 0.28, p < 0.005$ )
- A positive relationship between Confrontive Coping and Accepting Responsibility ( $r^2 = 0.28, p = 0.002$ )
- A positive relationship between Self-Controlling and Confrontive Coping ( $r^2 = 0.28, p = 0.005$ )
- A positive relationship between Seeking Social Support and Accepting Responsibility ( $r^2 = 0.27, p = 0.004$ )
- A positive relationship between Seeking Social Support and Distancing ( $r^2 = 0.22, p = 0.019$ )
- A positive relationship between Distancing and Planful Problem Solving ( $r^2 = 0.22, p = 0.022$ )
- A positive relationship between Confrontive Coping and Planful Problem Solving ( $r^2 = 0.21, p = 0.026$ ).

The weakest correlation found was a positive relationship between Seeking Social Support and Self-Controlling ( $r^2 = 0.19, p = 0.041$ ).

#### **4.2.3. Means and standard deviations for the AES by demographic factors**

The means and standard deviations for the sample were reported above. Tables 6 to 10 below report on mean scores by the relevant demographic variable used for the inferential statistics.

**Table 6: Mean differences by ethnicity for the AES**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Std. deviation</b>
Black	127.29	24	22.096
Coloured	121.60	78	15.728
Indian	117.75	4	7.676
White	131.00	8	14.823
Total	123.32	114	17.140

It is evident from Table 6 that the highest mean scores for EI were obtained by white participants (131) (SD = 14.82), followed by black (127.29) (SD = 22.10), Coloured (121.60) (SD = 15.73) and Indian participants (117.75) (SD = 7.68).

**Table 7: Mean differences by gender for the AES**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Std. deviation</b>
Female	124.44	87	16.800
Male	119.74	27	18.048
Total	123.32	114	17.140

Table 7 shows that females (124.44) (SD = 16.80) scored higher on EI than males (119.74) (SD = 18.05).

**Table 8: Mean differences by intention to continue with master's studies for the AES**

<b>Planning to continue with masters</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Std. deviation</b>
No	117.43	21	14.885
Yes	124.62	92	17.497
Missing data	128.00	1	.
Total	123.32	114	17.140

Table 8 shows that students who intended to continue with master's (124.62) (SD = 17.50) scored higher on EI than those that did not (117.43) (SD = 14.89).

**Table 9: Mean differences by students who work while studying for the AES**

<b>Work while studying</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Std. deviation</b>
No	122.37	62	15.827
Yes	124.59	51	18.842
Missing data	118.00	1	.
Total	123.32	114	17.140

Table 9 shows that students who are working while studying scored higher on EI (124.59) (SD = 18.84) than those who do not work (122.37) (SD = 15.83).

**Table 10: Mean differences by students who have bursaries for the AES**

<b>Bursary</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Std. deviation</b>
No	123.28	88	16.845
Yes	123.46	26	18.448
Total	123.32	114	17.140

Table 10 shows that students who have bursaries score slightly higher on EI (123.46) (SD = 18.45) than those who do not have bursaries (123.28) (SD = 16.85).

#### **4.2.4. Means and standard deviations for the WOCS by demographic variables**

The means and standard deviations for the sample were reported above. Tables 11 to 15 below report on mean scores by the relevant demographic variable used for the inferential statistics.

**Table 11: Mean differences by ethnicity for the WOCS subscales**

<b>Ethnicity</b>		<b>Confrontive Coping</b>	<b>Distancing</b>	<b>Self- controlling</b>	<b>Seeking Social Support</b>	<b>Accepting Responsibility</b>	<b>Escape- avoidance</b>	<b>Planful Problem Solving</b>	<b>Positive Reappraisal</b>
<b>Black</b>	Mean	9.21	8.96	9.00	10.88	6.88	9.83	11.96	15.13
	N	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24
	Std. deviation	3.134	3.169	3.967	3.993	2.659	4.824	3.593	4.068
<b>Coloured</b>	Mean	8.04	8.69	9.18	10.14	6.49	10.28	11.09	11.94
	N	78	78	78	78	78	78	78	78
	Std. deviation	3.510	3.753	3.596	4.703	2.642	5.811	3.889	5.676
<b>Indian</b>	Mean	9.00	11.00	12.75	11.75	7.75	12.50	11.75	14.25
	N	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
	Std. deviation	2.708	2.828	1.500	4.193	1.258	2.517	.957	2.062
<b>White</b>	Mean	9.25	6.25	8.25	8.50	5.50	8.50	10.25	7.88
	N	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
	Std. deviation	4.713	4.833	3.770	3.024	2.928	7.801	3.808	5.384
<b>Total</b>	Mean	8.40	8.66	9.20	10.24	6.54	10.14	11.24	12.40
	N	114	114	114	114	114	114	114	114
	Std. deviation	3.502	3.732	3.670	4.443	2.631	5.666	3.749	5.525

It is evident from Table 11 that the highest total mean score across all ethnicities was for Positive Reappraisal (12.40) (SD = 5.53). Black students scored highest on Positive Reappraisal (15.13) (SD = 4.07) and Planful Problem Solving (11.96) (SD = 3.59). In the case of Coloured students, the highest mean scores were obtained for Positive Reappraisal (11.94) (SD = 5.68) and Planful Problem Solving (11.09) (SD = 3.89). Indian students' highest mean scores were for Positive Reappraisal (15.13) (SD = 4.07) and Self-Controlling (12.75) (SD = 1.5). White students obtained the highest mean scores for Planful Problem Solving (10.25) (SD = 3.81) and Confrontive Coping (9.25) (SD = 4.71).

**Table 12: Mean differences by gender for the WOCS subscales**

<b>Gender</b>		<b>Confrontive</b>		<b>Seeking</b>		<b>Planful</b>		<b>Positive</b>	
		<b>Coping</b>	<b>Distancing</b>	<b>Self-</b>	<b>Social</b>	<b>Accepting</b>	<b>Escape-</b>		<b>Problem</b>
				<b>controlling</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>avoidance</b>	<b>Solving</b>	<b>Reappraisal</b>
<b>Female</b>	Mean	8.18	8.54	9.11	10.06	6.55	10.31	11.08	12.84
	N	87	87	87	87	87	87	87	87
	Std. deviation	3.262	3.627	3.482	3.972	2.591	5.433	3.936	5.528
<b>Male</b>	Mean	9.11	9.04	9.48	10.81	6.52	9.59	11.74	11.00
	N	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27
	Std. deviation	4.173	4.100	4.282	5.758	2.806	6.441	3.083	5.378
<b>Total</b>	Mean	8.40	8.66	9.20	10.24	6.54	10.14	11.24	12.40
	N	114	114	114	114	114	114	114	114
	Std. deviation	3.502	3.732	3.670	4.443	2.631	5.666	3.749	5.525



Table 12 shows that the highest total mean score for both males and females was Positive Reappraisal (12.40) (SD = 5.53). Females obtained the highest mean score on Positive Reappraisal (12.84) (SD = 5.53) and Planful Problem Solving (11.08) (SD = 3.94). Males' highest mean scores were obtained on Planful Problem Solving (11.74) (3.08) and Positive Reappraisal (11.00) (SD = 5.38).

**Table 13: Mean differences by intention to continue with master's studies for the WOCS subscales**

<b>Master's Plan</b>		<b>Confrontive Coping</b>	<b>Distancing</b>	<b>Self-controlling</b>	<b>Seeking Social Support</b>	<b>Accepting Responsibility</b>	<b>Escape-avoidance</b>	<b>Planful Problem Solving</b>	<b>Positive Reappraisal</b>
<b>No</b>	Mean	11.14	9.52	10.71	11.19	6.81	12.38	11.43	12.24
	N	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21
	Std. deviation	3.395	3.250	3.196	5.913	2.272	5.249	3.544	5.328
<b>Yes</b>	Mean	7.83	8.46	8.84	10.03	6.49	9.61	11.23	12.47
	N	92	92	92	92	92	92	92	92
	Std. deviation	3.226	3.841	3.713	4.069	2.728	5.686	3.818	5.621
<b>Missing data</b>	Mean	4.00	9.00	11.00	9.00	6.00	12.00	8.00	10.00
	N	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Std. deviation	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
<b>Total</b>	Mean	8.40	8.66	9.20	10.24	6.54	10.14	11.24	12.40
	N	114	114	114	114	114	114	114	114
	Std. deviation	3.502	3.732	3.670	4.443	2.631	5.666	3.749	5.525

Table 13 shows that the highest mean score for all students, despite their intention to continue with master's degrees, was Positive Reappraisal (12.40) (SD = 5.53). Those who intended to continue with master's studies scored highest on the coping strategies Positive Reappraisal (12.47) (SD = 5.62) and Planful Problem Solving (11.23) (SD = 3.82). Students who did not intend to continue with master's studies scored highest on Escape-avoidance (12.38) (SD = 5.25) and Positive Reappraisal (12.24) (SD = 5.33).

**Table 14: Mean differences by working while studying for the WOCS subscales**

<b>Work and study</b>		<b>Confrontive Coping</b>	<b>Distancing</b>	<b>Seeking Self-Controlling</b>	<b>Seeking Social Support</b>	<b>Accepting Responsibility</b>	<b>Escape-avoidance</b>	<b>Planful Problem Solving</b>	<b>Positive Reappraisal</b>
<b>No</b>	Mean	8.16	9.23	9.66	10.52	6.73	9.82	11.66	13.69
	N	62	62	62	62	62	62	62	62
	Std. deviation	3.255	3.664	3.598	5.130	2.705	5.052	3.589	4.918
<b>Yes</b>	Mean	8.78	8.02	8.65	9.94	6.35	10.47	10.88	10.96
	N	51	51	51	51	51	51	51	51
	Std. deviation	3.765	3.760	3.751	3.495	2.568	6.404	3.788	5.872
<b>Missing Data</b>	Mean	4.00	6.00	9.00	8.00	5.00	13.00	3.00	6.00
	N	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Std. deviation	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
<b>Total</b>	Mean	8.40	8.66	9.20	10.24	6.54	10.14	11.24	12.40
	N	114	114	114	114	114	114	114	114
	Std. deviation	3.502	3.732	3.670	4.443	2.631	5.666	3.749	5.525

Table 14 demonstrates that the highest mean score for students, whether working or not during their studies, was Positive Reappraisal (12.40) (SD = 5.53). Those who did not work while studying obtained the highest mean scores on Positive Reappraisal (13.69) (SD = 4.92) and Planful Problem Solving (11.66) (SD = 3.59). The highest mean scores for students who worked while studying were obtained on Positive Reappraisal (10.96) (SD = 5.87) and Planful Problem Solving (10.88) (SD = 3.79).



**Table 15: Mean differences by bursaries for the WOCS subscales**

<b>Bursary</b>		<b>UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE</b>							
		<b>Confrontive Coping</b>	<b>Distancing</b>	<b>Self-controlling</b>	<b>Seeking Social Support</b>	<b>Accepting Responsibility</b>	<b>Escape-avoidance</b>	<b>Planful Problem Solving</b>	<b>Positive Reappraisal</b>
<b>No</b>	Mean	8.32	8.56	9.00	10.00	6.35	9.52	11.22	12.02
	N	88	88	88	88	88	88	88	88
	Std. deviation	3.647	3.883	3.848	4.584	2.631	5.237	3.669	5.575
<b>Yes</b>	Mean	8.69	9.00	9.88	11.04	7.19	12.23	11.31	13.69
	N	26	26	26	26	26	26	26	26
	Std. deviation	3.004	3.212	2.957	3.904	2.577	6.617	4.087	5.252
<b>Total</b>	Mean	8.40	8.66	9.20	10.24	6.54	10.14	11.24	12.40
	N	114	114	114	114	114	114	114	114
	Std. deviation	3.502	3.732	3.670	4.443	2.631	5.666	3.749	5.525

Table 15 shows that the highest mean scores for all students, whether they had a bursary or not, were obtained for Positive Reappraisal (12.40) (SD = 5.53). Students who were in possession of bursaries obtained the highest mean scores on Positive Reappraisal (13.69) (SD = 5.25) and Escape-avoidance (12.23) (SD = 6.62). Students who did not have bursaries scored highest on Positive Reappraisal (12.02) (SD = 5.58) and Planful Problem Solving (11.22) (SD = 3.67).

#### 4.2.5. The relationship between EI and WOCS

The first research question is focused on the relationship between EI and the WOCS, as per the results shown below.



**Table 16: Correlation between emotional intelligence and WOCS subscales**

		TOTAL_AES	Confrontive Coping	Distancing	Self-controlling	Seeking Social Support	Accepting Responsibility	Escape-avoidance	Planful Problem Solving	Positive Reappraisal
<b>Total AES</b>	Pearson correlation	1	.083	.031	.034	.138	-.069	-.053	.052	.146
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.377	.742	.721	.143	.466	.574	.586	.121
	N	114	114	114	114	114	114	114	114	114

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

### 4.3. The relationship between demographic factors and emotional intelligence

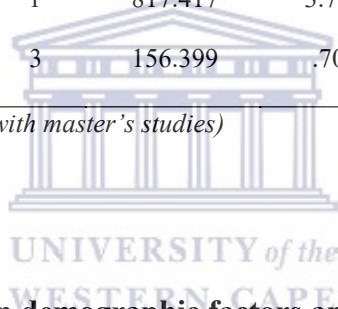
Research question 2 investigates the relationship between selected demographic factors and EI. The ANOVA table below reports on whether there were mean differences between gender, intention to continue with master's studies, working while studying, having bursaries, and ethnicity and EI.

**Table 17: Correlation between demographic factors and emotional intelligence**

Source of variation (effect)	Type III sum of squares	df	MS (mean square)	F	Significance P value
Gender	452.465	1	8.61	2.051	.156
Master's plan	307.241	2	153.620	.697	.501
Work-study	1694.211	2	847.105	3.841	.025
Bursary	817.417	1	817.417	3.706	.058
Ethnicity	817.417	3	156.399	.709	.549

*Master's plan (planning to continue with master's studies)*

*Work-study (working while studying)*



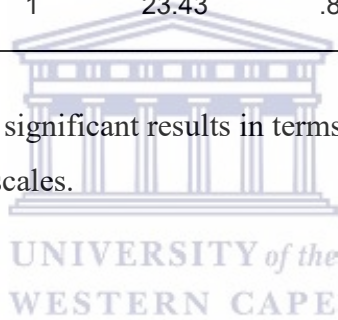
### 4.4. The relationship between demographic factors and WOCS

Research question three investigates the relationship between demographic factors and the WOCS. The MANOVA tables (18 to 22) below report on whether there were mean differences between gender, intention to continue with master's studies, working while studying, having bursaries, and ethnicity and coping.

**Table 18: Relationships between demographic factors and the WOCS: Gender**

Source of variation (effect)	Type III sum of squares	df	MS (mean square)	F	Significance
Confrontive Coping	8.61	1	8.61	.88	.35
Distancing	9.25	1	9.25	.68	.41
Self-controlling	1.89	1	1.89	.17	.69
Seeking Social Support	4.98	1	4.98	.25	.62
Accepting Responsibility	.25	1	.25	.03	.86
Escape-avoidance	28.12	1	28.13	.97	.33
Planful Problem Solving	1.3	1	1.3	.09	.77
Positive Reappraisal	23.43	1	23.43	.84	.36

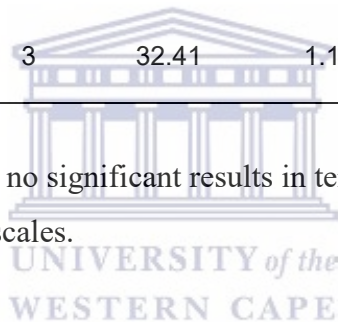
The variable on gender shows no significant results in terms of mean differences for this variable and any of the eight subscales.



**Table 19: Relationships between demographic factors and the WOCS: Ethnicity**

Source of variation (effect)	Type III sum of squares	Df	MS (mean square)	F	Significance
Confrontive Coping	27.92	3	9.31	.95	.42
Distancing	61.01	3	20.36	1.49	.22
Self-controlling	76.70	3	25.56	2.23	.09
Seeking Social Support	56.30	3	18.77	.93	.43
Accepting Responsibility	17.38	3	5.79	.79	.51
Escape-avoidance	103.40	3	34.47	1.19	.32
Planful Problem Solving	9.03	3	3.01	.21	.89
Positive Reappraisal	97.23	3	32.41	1.16	.33

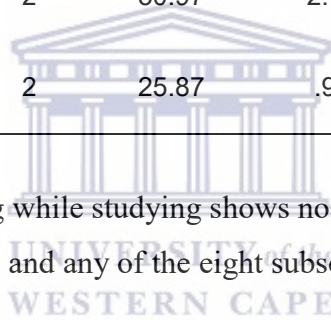
The variable on ethnicity showed no significant results in terms of mean differences for this variable and any of the eight subscales.



**Table 20: Relationships between demographic factors and the WOCS: Students working and studying**

Source of variation (effect)	Type III sum of squares	df	MS (mean square)	F	Significance
Confrontive Coping	54.34	2	27.17	2.78	.07
Distancing	2.36	2	1.18	.09	.92
Self-controlling	5.06	2	2.53	.22	.80
Seeking Social Support	14.77	2	7.38	.36	.70
Accepting Responsibility	10.63	2	5.31	.72	.49
Escape-avoidance	9.35	2	4.67	.16	.85
Planful Problem Solving	61.95	2	30.97	2.13	.13
Positive Reappraisal	51.74	2	25.87	.92	.40

The variable for students working while studying shows no significant results in terms of mean differences for this variable and any of the eight subscales.

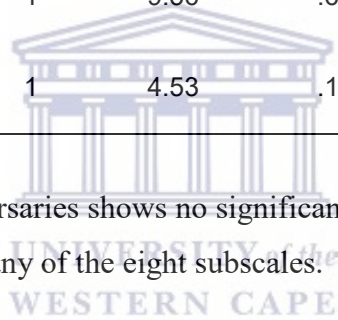




**Table 21: Relationships between demographic factors and the WOCS: Students with bursaries**

Source of variation (effect)	Type III sum of squares	df	MS (mean square)	F	Significance
Confrontive Coping	20.04	1	20.04	2.05	.16
Distancing	6.04	1	6.04	.44	.50
Self-controlling	7.28	1	7.28	.64	.43
Seeking Social Support	.45	1	.05	.02	.88
Accepting Responsibility	.01	1	.01	.001	.97
Escape-avoidance	40.03	1	40.03	1.38	.24
Planful Problem Solving	9.36	1	9.36	.65	.42
Positive Reappraisal	4.52	1	4.53	.16	.69

The variable for students with bursaries shows no significant results in terms of mean differences for this variable and any of the eight subscales.



**Table 22: Relationships between demographic factors and the WOCS: Students planning to continue with master’s studies**

Source of variation (effect)	Type III sum of squares	df	MS (mean square)	F	Significance
Confrontive Coping	128.73	2	64.37	6.59	<b>.002</b>
Distancing	30.11	2	15.06	1.10	.34
Self-controlling	1.77	2	.88	.08	.93
Seeking Social Support	43.82	2	21.91	1.08	.34
Accepting Responsibility	.49	2	.25	.033	.97
Escape-avoidance	207.69	2	103.85	3.57	<b>.032</b>
Planful Problem Solving	11.40	2	5.70	.39	.68
Positive Reappraisal	18.19	2	9.10	.33	.72

The variable for students planning to continue with master’s studies showed significant results in terms of mean differences on the subscales Confrontive Coping and Escape Avoidance.

A MANOVA was used to calculate the impact of the relationship between demographics and coping strategies. The WOCS and the demographic variables complied with the assumptions required for the application of Roy’s Largest Root (Stevens, 2002). The results presented in Table 17 showed no significant correlation between demographic factors and emotional intelligence. Tables 18 to 21 show no significant correlation between the demographic factors gender, ethnicity, working while studying, and whether or not the respondents had bursaries, and coping. The results showed that coping only had a statistically significant impact on whether students wanted to continue with master’s studies, and they did not correlate on a statistically relevant level with the other demographic factors. The results of students planning to continue with master’s studies in psychology are presented in Table 22.

More specifically, from Table 22, only two of the independent variables delivered a significant proportion of the variance, those being Confrontive Coping ( $F = 6.59$ ;  $p = 0.005$ ;

Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.20$ ; significance level  $p < 0.05$ ) and Escape-avoidance ( $F = 3.57$ ;  $p = 0.032$   
Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.20$ ; significance level  $p < 0.05$ ).



## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

This chapter sets out the results of the quantitative analysis. First, the internal consistency results are briefly discussed, followed by the descriptive statistics of the sample, an overview of the results analysis according to the study's research aims, and a summary and conclusion. Finally, the limitations of this study are indicated, and recommendations for future research are made.

#### 5.1. Overview of the descriptive statistics

##### 5.1.1. Sample characteristics

The majority of the respondents in the sample was female (76.3%). The racial distribution of the sample was 68.4% Coloured, 21.1% black, 7% white, and 3.5% Indian individuals. This is in line with the University of the Western Cape's racial profile. The majority of the respondents (80.7%) indicated an interest to study a master's degree in psychology, despite the selection process that only allows a limited number of students. This may result in major stress, as those who do not succeed in being selected often experience feelings of rejection, and the select few who are successful have reported questioning whether they are, in fact, good enough (Booyesen & Naidoo, 2016). The impact of these outcomes, whether successfully selected into a master's programme or not, can be devastating on an already vulnerable population. The lasting effects of a historically racialised South Africa can be argued to impact on students' self-esteem and subjective view of their academic abilities. It can be argued that this would impact on student's coping strategies. A study on previously disadvantaged South African students confirmed that students who appraised their academic requirements as too demanding and their lives as stressful, showed poorer adjustment, while students who displayed high levels of self-esteem were better adjusted (Elias & Haynes, 2008).

Almost half the sample size had jobs while studying (44.7%), which may be indicative of the economic pressures with which this sample has to deal. Economic pressures can be argued to include living costs and accumulating student debts. This type of pressure may impact on students' study time and other aspects of their lives. Manthei and Gilmore (2005) report that students who hold jobs during their studies typically spend on essential living expenses. Moreover, working leaves less time than desired for social activities, study and recreation.

A mere 22.8% of respondents reported receiving bursaries for their studies. This can be argued to be concerning, considering the university’s historical disadvantage in terms of the effects stemming from South Africa’s apartheid regime. Although this sample does not reflect the general South African population, it is a reflection of UWC and is representative of the students of this university, from which the sample was drawn. In 2016, UWC’s annual report reiterated that it was a black university, the population of which was classified as predominantly Coloured, black and Indian, collectively constituting more than 90% of the population (UWC, 2017). Thus, data from this study points to a disadvantaged population and was not representative of other institutions. McKenzie and Schweitzer (2001) confirm the notion that an important role in the academic success of disadvantaged students are associated with the degree of financial difficulties they may experience, such as difficulties with regard to the funding of studies or employment responsibilities.

## 5.2. Internal consistencies

Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  is defined as a function of elements or questions contained in a test and the average covariance between item-pairs, and the variance of the total score (Dunn, Baguley & Brunsten, 2013). It can also be described as the internal reliability of a test, that different elements reliably measure different constructs. Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  is interpreted in the following ranges according to George and Mallery (2003):

$0.9 \leq \alpha$	Excellent
$0.8 \leq \alpha < 0.9$	Good
$0.7 \leq \alpha < 0.8$	Acceptable
$0.6 \leq \alpha < 0.7$	Questionable
$0.5 \leq \alpha < 0.6$	Poor
$\alpha < 0.5$	Unacceptable

Table 3 shows that the AES yielded a Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  of 0.696. According to the American Psychological Association’s (2010) guideline, the decimals in this case can be rounded and would place the AES’s Cronbach  $\alpha$  at 0.7 and in the acceptable range. Previous studies found the internal consistency to be 0.90 (Schutte et al., 1998). More recent studies for diverse samples reported a mean alpha across samples of 0.87. Thus, it can be argued that, as the AES is normed on English-speaking populations, demographic factors such as the language of the sample may impact internal consistency scores. Other studies for diverse samples reported a mean alpha across samples of 0.87. For this study, it can be noted that the Cronbach’s

$\alpha$  fell below of what has been found by other studies noted in this paragraph, but still in the acceptable range and fit for interpretation.

Given the WOCS's eight subscales, a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for each of the scales was provided and yielded varying results. A score within the unacceptable range was yielded by the Accepting Responsibility subscale, with "poor" internal reliability on the following subscales: Confrontive Coping, Self-controlling and Seeking Social Support. The subscale Distancing fell in the questionable range. The following scales fell within the acceptable range: Escape-avoidance (Cronbach alpha  $\alpha = 0.77$ ) and Planful Problem Solving (Cronbach alpha  $\alpha = 0.72$ ). Positive Reappraisal was in the good range. Because of the varying internal reliability, an overall Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was also calculated and was measured to be in the "excellent" range (Cronbach alpha  $\alpha = 0.91$ ). The WOCS has been adapted and used in many contexts. Evidence regarding the construct validity of the scores is limited and inconclusive. Internal consistencies are observed to be at the lower end when applied to coping measures (Billings & Moos, 1981). Billings and Moos (1981) state that item redundancy is minimised within each coping category, which means that independent clusters are created within each category. Also, the use of a specific coping reaction may lead to the desired effect, which decreases the desire and probability that other coping reactions from a similar category will be used. Coping is thus a complex construct and the results should be interpreted with an understanding of the limitations discussed above. As a result, correlatives were computed for the eight subscales of the WOCS.

The correlations between the different subscales of the WOCS revealed some interesting trends that may contribute to our understanding of the different coping strategies applied by the respondents in the context of this study. The highest correlations found were between the following emotion-focused coping strategies: Positive Reappraisal and Accepting Responsibility ( $p = 0.53$ ); Confrontive Coping and Escape-avoidance ( $p = 0.46$ ); and Accepting Responsibility and Self-controlling ( $p = 0.45$ ). This suggests that there is a stronger relationship between emotion-focused coping strategies. Nonetheless a fairly strong correlation was found between the two problem-focused strategies Seeking Social Support and Planful Problem Solving, showing that the sample consisting of psychology third-year and honours students reported an additional correlation between effective coping strategies. This was dissimilar to other studies, the results of which indicated the highest intercorrelated subscales to be between Accepting Responsibility and Escape-avoidance at  $p = 0.39$ ; Self-controlling and Planful Problem Solving at  $p = 0.37$ ; and between Planful Problem Solving and Positive Reappraisal at  $p = 0.39$ , when compared to both problem- and emotion-focused coping strategies (Folkman

& Lazarus, 1985). This dissimilarity may be explained by contextual factors requiring respondents to have employed and mastered problem-focused strategies to challenges which can be changed by accessing and utilising the resources available to them. Given the demographic of the respondents, the majority of whom hails from previously disadvantaged communities, it can be deduced that they have also been faced with challenges that were and are impossible to change. In such scenarios, emotion-based coping strategies may be the most appropriate means of coping to escape the situation in favour of self-preservation. This might explain the high correlations between mostly emotion-focused coping strategies. It can be deduced that the respondents had developed, or learnt, effective coping skills illustrated by the fairly high correlation between Seeking Social Support and Planful Problem Solving, enabling them to achieve access to tertiary education and continue to an honours qualification in psychology. The combination of being from a previously disadvantaged community and having had access to and completed further studies and education could account for the combination of emotion-focused coping strategies and the correlation between the problem-focused subscales.

### **5.3. Performance on the AES and WOCS**

#### **5.3.1. Emotional intelligence**

This study's research sample appeared to yield a similar AES mean (123.32) and standard deviation (17.14) result, compared to those of numerous other studies (e.g., mean = 123.42, standard deviation = 14.52) (Bastian, Burns & Nettelbeck, 2005; Brackett & Mayer, 2003; Gaustello & Gaustello, 2003). This implies that this study sample hold similar EI capacities as the undergraduate psychology students of the mentioned studies (Brackett & Mayer, 2003). Given the limited information in the literature with regard to the interpretation of the complete AES score, the author opted to interpret the score according to the available information. The results in Table 2 indicate that the average respondent presented with an average AES score of 123.32 (SD = 17.140). The overall mean obtained by the sample would therefore be slightly above the mean, but would indicate an average level of emotional intelligence as defined earlier. Given these results, it can be surmised that the respondents would present with an average ability to remain cognisant of their own emotions and perceive the emotions experienced by others. Emotional intelligence is linked to improved psychological well-being and healthier relationships, but results show that it was not significantly correlated with the coping strategies measured by the WOCS.

### 5.3.2. Ways of coping

The study's sample mean scores for emotional-focused strategies of coping may imply that respondents increasingly have to deal with situations they are unable to change, resulting in a higher reliance on emotional coping strategies. This is evidenced by the significant differences in Folkman and Lazarus's (1985) calculated means over five occasions within one sample for Distancing (3.05), Accepting Responsibility (1.87), Escape-avoidance (3.18) and Positive Reappraisal (3.48) when compared to this study, which yielded means of Distancing (8.66), Accepting Responsibility (6.54), Escape-avoidance (10.14), and Positive Reappraisal (12.40). It appears as if the means for the current sample are considerably higher than in previous studies. Folkman and Lazarus (1985) maintain that work-related circumstances prompted more problem-focused coping than health- or family-related circumstances, while health-related circumstances prompted more emotion-focused coping than work- or family-related circumstances. It can be argued that respondents face high levels of perceived unchangeable circumstances impacting their coping (such as contextual challenges) that require preeminent levels of emotional input to overcome stress.

Likewise, the sample of this study yielded higher means (e.g. Seeking Social Support mean = 10.24; and Planful Problem Solving mean = 11.24) in problem-focused coping strategies, compared to other studies (Seeking Social Support mean = 5.40; and Planful Problem Solving mean = 7.25) (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985). As argued earlier, students employing Seeking Social Support as a problem-focused coping strategy might also seek social support in order to diminish the effects of the challenges faced (Carver, 2011). However, this coping strategy can be used as an ineffective strategy when accepting sympathy and understanding from others while not confronting the task in an effective manner. These strategies point to the increased use of coping strategies, which may be understood as increased circumstances requiring coping for successful academic and emotional well-being outcomes. The sample's high mean scores in Planful Problem Solving are evidence that the respondents were able to identify the variables of a problem and proactively solve the aspects that were within their control to a higher degree than the study referred to. This can be argued to be related to contextual factors, such as previously disadvantaged communities, where it had been crucial to adopt problem-focused coping strategies in order to find successful ways of obtaining tertiary access and success.



#### **5.4. The relationship between demographic factors, emotional intelligence and coping strategies**

The primary aim of the research was to establish the relationship between EI and coping. The secondary aim was to explore the relationship between demographic factors and both EI and levels of coping strategies in psychology students, leading to academic success. The correlation between EI and coping is discussed first, followed by the discussion of the ANOVA and MANOVA results.

#### **5.5. The correlation between EI and coping**

A Pearson's Product-Moment correlation analysis was computed. The primary results from the Pearson's Product-Moment correlation analysis showed no significant correlations between the AES and any of the WOCS subscales. In light of this, ANOVA and MANOVA were undertaken in accordance with the research questions outlined earlier. With regard to this study, the relationship between EI and coping were found to be non-significant. Therefore, despite the argued potential impact of EI on coping and academic success, the findings from this study do not reflect this. It was hypothesised that there was a relationship between EI and coping, and the findings were contrary to what was expected.

Although some previous studies showed a relationship between EI and coping (Bar-On, 1997; Gawali, 2012; Noorbakhsh et al., 2010; Saklofske et al., 2012), an Australian study on 246 first-year psychology students hypothesised that EI was related to higher levels of academic achievement, life satisfaction and coping ability, and employed the AES, Trait Meta Mood Scale, (Mayer et al., 2004), and Emotional Intelligence Test to assess this (Bastian et al., 2005). This study found that personality and cognitive abilities predicted academic success more than EI. Similar to this study, the results may be attributed to the self-report measures employed in that the perception of problem-solving and coping ability was measured, and not the concrete skill per se. This indicates that additional factors of coping abilities may have influenced results. It may be argued that other factors, such as personality and cognitive abilities, have a more significant relationship with coping than EI (Bastian et al., 2005). This may be true for this study considering similar findings in other studies.

Furthermore, it is possible that employing different EI and coping scales may have yielded different results based on demographic dynamics and scale-specific qualities. Another possible reason for the non-significant results could be that the sample consisted of a homogenous group of university students. Lastly, demographics may be more important or

may mediate the relationship between EI and coping. For example, the difference between males and female respondents may yield different results on EI and coping.

### **5.6. The relationship between EI and coping and demographic variables**

Two sets of analyses were completed. First, mean differences for the demographic variables gender, ethnicity, working while studying, receiving a bursary and the intention to continue with a master's degree and AES were computed. Second, mean differences for the demographic variables gender, ethnicity, working while studying, receiving a bursary and the intention to continue with a master's degree and WOCS were computed.

### **5.7. ANOVA of the AES and demographic factors**

The ANOVA was used to investigate the relationship between EI and gender, ethnicity, working while studying, receiving a bursary and the intention to continue with a master's. Of these demographic variables, only "working while studying" was significant (0.025).

While the statistic results reveal mean differences for gender, ethnicity, working while studying, receiving a bursary and the intention to continue with a master's, these need to be considered in the context of the ANOVAS. None of these were significant as per the ANOVAS below; only "working while studying" was significant for the AES. From the mean scores, it indicates that those who were working while studying (mean score = 124.59, SD = 18.84) obtained a higher score than those not working and studying (mean score = 122.37, SD = 15.83). This is consistent with the limited literature on the effect working while studying has on EI, which maintains that these individuals experienced increased levels of self-confidence and drive (O'Connor & Cordova, 2010, p. 368). It can be argued that these students' self-esteem is perhaps boosted as they are investing in their personal growth while simultaneously earning money. Coupling these two responsibilities may be strenuous on the time students have available for studying, but rewarding when managed appropriately and successfully. Therefore, it can be hypothesised that levels of EI will increase for this cohort of students owing to their dual activities and the effects thereof.

It can further be deliberated that there is an overlap between ethnicity and socio-economic status (SES) in South Africa. Given this overlap, it can be expected that this student group will experience financial constraints, such as a need for bursaries. Financial support can be categorised into two areas, namely working while studying, and financial bursaries and grants. Working while studying was found to be significantly correlated with EI in the present

study. Literature on the effects of working while studying on EI is scant. In a study by Carmeli (2003), results showed that EI increased positive work attitudes and outcomes, and regulated the effect of work and family conflict. O'Connor and Cordova (2010) assessed the experiences of full-time workers and part-time students. Their findings highlighted that these individuals valued being students despite their occupational commitments, and their self-confidence and need to achieve was a direct counterpart for a challenging graduate programme (O'Connor & Cordova, 2010, p. 368). One explanation could be that EI was higher in the students who worked and studied simultaneously, as they possibly found satisfaction and increased self-esteem in their personal and educational investment. Another explanation could be that working students are aware of their time-constraints and this awareness could propel them to work harder in order to achieve and become solution focused, which further enhances their problem solving abilities and enables them to cope more effectively with competing demands. As Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory confirms, systems are closely interlinked. Thus, when an individual's EI increases their work attitude, outcomes and their self-value may increase, as well as their level of EI. Finally, these interlink with students' postgraduate studies.

While other demographic variables are not significant, they are discussed, as they seem to diverge from what was concluded in the literature. The literature showed emotional intelligence to be higher among females than in males, which is relevant for the purposes of this study. Day and Carrol (2004) report that there was a significant difference between women and men included in all the scales of the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test. Similar results were found in a study by Van Rooy, Alonso and Viswesvaran, (2005) that consisted of 330 respondents. In a separate study conducted by Salovey (2000), 946 respondents who reported meaningfully higher scores on all facets of emotional intelligence were women. More recently, Wojciechowski, Stolarski and Matthews (2014) found similar results, supporting the finding that female respondents tested higher on emotional intelligence than male respondents. Thus, the results for gender are surprising. As mentioned, previous studies showed a clear link between gender and EI. One possibility is that gender differences may not be as marked among senior psychology students, such as those in the present sample. It can be argued that all gender differences may be less significant for psychology students, as males meaning to enter the profession may show greater EI than males in other professions.

There were no significant results involving ethnicity and EI in the current study. Unfortunately, literature on a possible link between ethnicity and EI is scarce. One of the few studies that assessed ethnic group differences in EI found conflicting results and emphasised the need for more studies exploring ethnic differences in EI (Roberts, Zeidner & Matthews,

2001, p. 270). Consensus-based scores yielded white (mean 0.28, SD 6.58) and ethnic minorities (mean -0.63, SD 7.12), thus group participants were not reliably discriminable.

However, when expert scoring criteria were used, white participants (mean 1.16, SD 5.86) scored significantly higher than the ethnic minority participants (mean -2.43, SD 5.98). On the contrary, an American study on 275 undergraduate psychology students, racially classified as White, African American and Hispanic, reported that minority groups (i.e., Hispanics and Blacks) scored higher than Whites in EI (Van Rooy et al., 2005). In light of this, it can be said that there appears to be no concern of adverse impact implications related to ethnicity and EI, and that further research is required. By considering this study's focus on EI, cultural capital can be linked to ethnicity. As a social component within a system of exchange, cultural capital includes the accrued cultural information that indicate social status and power (Bourdieu, 2011). It can be argued that levels of EI are closely linked to cultural groups, as is education and intellect. An American study on three schools with diverse socio-economic compositions showed a positive correlation coefficient ( $\tau\text{-}b = 0.242$ ) between EI and household income (Harrod & Scheer, 2005). Their results suggest that as household income increases, so do EI scores. In light of this study's respondents and their context, it can be argued that the majority of the participants originate from previously disadvantaged backgrounds. This may imply that they come from lower household incomes than students at other institutions, and may also account for the non-significant results found in the present study.

The relationship between receiving a bursary and EI is unknown. The present study found that those who had bursaries approached significance ( $p = 0.06$ ) for EI. One tentative possibility for this finding that can be explored is that these students have increased awareness of an opportunity granted to them. This may impact on their capacity to be aware of, control, and express their emotions. This study's results for students with an intention to continue with their master's degrees yielded non-significant results. A South African study assessing the value of EI for success in postgraduate studies revealed that successful students appear to be resilient with regard to quality of life and optimal performance, while unsuccessful students have destructive emotions (Kapp, 2000). Based on this finding, it can be hypothesised that successful students may also display higher levels of EI. Given that the current sample consists only of third-year and honours students, some of which who would have had to go through a very competitive process to be admitted to the academic programme, it can be argued that this pool displays higher levels of EI. Within this context of increased levels of EI, the decision to continue with master's studies or not may therefore not be playing a significant role in EI.

## 5.8. MANOVA of the WOCS and demographic factors

The MANOVA showed non-significant results for all variables (gender, ethnicity, working while studying, possessing bursaries), except for those who had intentions to continue with master's studies and coping strategies.

While the statistic results reveal mean differences for gender, ethnicity, working while studying, receiving a bursary and the intention to continue with a master's, these need to be considered in the context of the MANOVAS. None of these were significant as per the MANOVAS below, only "intention to continue with a master's" was significant for the WOCS, as a mean score of 12.47 (SD = 5.62) for Positive Reappraisal and 11.23 (SD = 3.82) for Planful Problem Solving was obtained. Thus, students displayed higher levels of coping strategies when they aspired towards furthering their studies. This correlates with the literature that has found that undergraduate students were more likely to pursue further education and research endeavors, possibly implying that these students actively apply and multiply their coping strategies (Hathaway, Nagda & Gregerman, 2002). These coping strategies can be understood to assist students in their academic undertakings. By employing positive connotation of placing the focus on personal development, students are able to envision and motivate themselves to pursue additional training while simultaneously utilising analytic strategies to adjust the situation in an advantageous manner to maximise their academic outcomes. It can be said then, that the intent to continue with master's yields increased levels of coping, expanding on students' academic resilience.

Gender is closely associated with both EI and coping strategies. The non-significant results for gender were unexpected findings. Matud (2004) conducted a study on 2816 people from a homogeneous Spanish population and found that women suffer more stress than men and their coping strategy is more emotion-focused compared to that of men. Copeland and Hess (1995) found that males were prone to employ avoiding problems, physical and passive diversions, while females used catharsis, proactive orientation, self-reliance and positive imagery. In terms of the current instrument, this study finding implies that males are therefore more likely to utilise Escape-avoidance and Distancing than females, while females are more likely to utilise Confrontive Coping strategies. Like previously argued for EI, gender differences for psychology students may be less marked. The findings could be related to the fact that males studying psychology may not be representative of males in a more general context. It can be argued that males studying psychology have higher levels of EI and may therefore also adopt diverse coping strategies, which include strategies traditionally utilised

by females. Therefore in this sample, the gender differences may not be marked. Further research is needed to explore whether gender differences do exist outside the sample, as in other studies.

Ethnicity was not a significant factor for coping strategies. South African studies have not explored the link between ethnicity and coping strategies. A study of ethnic differences in stress, coping, and well-being between three ethnic groups in Malaysia (Malays, Chinese, and “Indians”) of different religions (Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus, respectively) found differences with respect to their employment of emotion-focused strategies related to their religious stance (Ong & Moschis, 2009). This may imply that, although this study did not yield significant results in terms of participants’ ethnicity, further factors such as religion may be explored. As mentioned previously, the overlap between SES and ethnicity implies that studies that investigate the relationship between the two can be helpful. One American study (a two-year study of stress, psychopathology, and medical utilisation) assessing the coping strategies between middle-class and low-income participants at a hospital found that low-income individuals generally used more coping strategies and explicitly employed emotion-focused coping strategies more than Folkman and Lazarus’s (1988) original sample (Brantley, O’Hea, Jones & Mehan, 2002). On the basis of this, it can be hypothesised that ethnicity would be significant. One possible explanation may be that the context in South Africa and the relationship between ethnicity and SES may be more complex than in northern hemisphere countries. Due to the majority of South Africans’ low-income status, it can be expected that these individuals require and expand on coping strategies to make ends meet.

The factor of having a job while studying yielded non-significant results in the present study. A British study of 359 students working during their graduate programme concluded that there were adverse effects on study (Curtis & Shani, 2000). These effects included missed lectures, and students’ views that their grades were lower than they would have been, had they not been employed. Still, students commented that working not only provided monetary gains, but also the development of skills, a superior understanding of business and increased confidence, all of which are beneficial to their education (Curtis & Shani, 2002). Given the latter finding, it can be hypothesised that these benefits, similar to increased confidence, can contribute to higher levels of coping. This can also be linked back to the higher scores for coping in this sample relative to other samples. It can be argued that for honours level, the percentage of students employed while studying (44.7%) was relatively high. The way in which the question was formulated made it unclear what types of jobs the students were doing, and the potential benefits that were expected in terms of increased coping may not have accrued.

Further research is needed to explore under what conditions working while studying can increase aspects like confidence and self-esteem, and consequently coping.

The factor of being granted a bursary did not yield significant results in relation to coping strategies. A mere 22.8% of the sample reported having a bursary. It is surprising that the results were non-significant for the study, as it can be argued that financial stress may elevate levels of coping strategies. Rossouw (2018) studied the stressors and coping strategies among nursing students in the Western Cape and found that major financial issues (n = 203, 100%) added to their stressors and, as a result, the focus of their coping strategies. These concerns were revealed in reported problems relating to bursaries and those who did not have bursaries. Rossouw (2018) concluded and argued that these financial difficulties placed participants in an emotional state of ambiguity about their future prospects, not knowing how they would be able to keep up with their financial responsibilities. In terms of the present study, it can therefore be hypothesised that these emotional stressors could negatively impact on coping ability. Again, this variable was not significant. One possibility is that the historical disadvantage among respondents might have taught them to cope without financial support. The absence of bursaries would thus not impact on their studies since entering the university as undergraduate students.

It can be hypothesised that the decision to pursue master's studies is indicative of higher levels of coping. An American study found undergraduate research participants were suggestively more probable to pursue graduate education and additional research activity (Hathaway, et al., 2002). This may imply that those engaging with the challenges associated with their studies may utilise, and even expand, their coping strategies to further their education in order to reach their future career aspirations. Consistent with this argument, there was, in fact, a significant result for this variable. The decision to pursue master's studies was associated with the subscales Escape-avoidance ( $p = 0.03$ ) and Confrontive Coping ( $p = 0.00$ ). The findings can be argued to indicate that coping strategies employed could result in the ability to transform the stressful event into a less stressful one by, in this case, confronting the problematic elements that can be changed and to escape and avoid those elements which cannot be changed. On a cognitive level, the student might gain a wider perception that alters the perceived level of threat and therefore increases their self-efficacy (Soderstrom, Dolbier, Leiferman & Steinhardt, 2000). An increase in self-efficacy would imply

a greater belief in one's distinctive ability to reach a goal; in this case, to continue with the master's degree in psychology (Bandura, 1982).

Escape-avoidance strategies are utilised when situations are difficult to resolve, similar to those faced by participants from previously disadvantaged communities. It has been previously argued that individuals from situations of historical disadvantage and low-income contexts may face many situations that cannot be altered, and hence they learn to effectively apply Escape-avoidance strategies. Those participants opting to continue with master's studies could be argued to have developed the ability to confront challenges that they deem to be within their control, in addition to escaping and avoiding situations that cause emotional discomfort. The effectivity of this style of coping could be deduced when correlated with the number of students who achieve entry into a master's programme, which is not within the scope of this study.





## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitations of the study included the following: self-report instrument results are considered to yield perceived abilities rather than actual abilities. Thus, causality cannot be surmised due to the correlational and cross-sectional design employed. Instead, significant results would propose associations between variables (Bles, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2006). In addition, the scales used in the study are not normed for the South African population but are considered to be reliable for diverse groups due to their language, education and similar experiences when compared to the normed groups (Vitaliano et al., 1985; Schutte, et al., 2009). Thus, the sample's language, education levels and experiences are not considered to be barriers in obtaining reliable data.

Furthermore, convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method that may result in a skewed representation of specific groups within a sample. This may lead to incorrect generalisations (Bless et al., 2006). The consequences of this sampling method relate to the lack of generalisability to the larger population. Therefore these findings should exclusively be used to understand the representing sample and caution should be taken to employ inferences to the all-inclusive population of third-year and honours students.

It is worth noting that data was collected at four different points in the study, with no records being kept differentiating between third-year and honours students' responses that could possibly implicate different levels of EI and coping between the two. Thus, it was not possible to determine if some of the significant results related to the level of study or if there could be differences in coping strategies between undergraduate and honours students. However, given that third-year students are senior students that are often motivated to further their studies, there might not be differences between the two groups. Additionally, the small sample size and their specialisation in psychology limits inferences to the general population. Likewise, as the majority of the respondents were female, probable inferences of generalisability for males may deprive gender-specific differences of the sample. The findings may not be generalised to other South African community samples. It is recommended that further studies include actual measured abilities to complement the self-report instrument used in this study.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

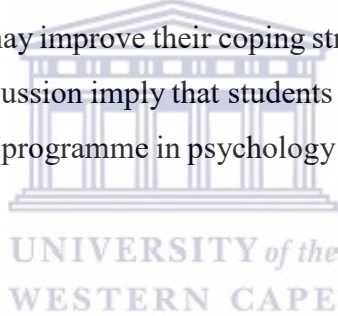
In order to improve coping, it is recommended that work-integrated learning be endorsed earlier in programmes to develop students' skills. Further studies on students that are employed while studying and the impact of their internal locus of control may yield important findings for postgraduate psychology students. This may allow students to improve self-esteem and functioning on postgraduate level. Further recommendations include research with a larger, more representative sample and distinguishing between third-year and honours students.



## CONCLUSION

This study, an investigation of the relationship between selected demographic factors, emotional intelligence and coping in a sample of psychology students at the University of the Western Cape, found that there is no statistically significant relationship between respondents' coping and their EI. Emotional intelligence is argued to be important, as this enables psychology students, in particular, to monitor their own and others' emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to manage their thinking and actions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 189).

In the case of this sample, it appears that coping is possibly linked to other constructs. Conversely, it was found that students who worked while studying displayed increased levels of EI, and those who intended to further their studies on master's level, utilised higher coping strategies compared to those who did not indicate that they would continue their studies. These findings are consistent with other studies that elucidate that working increases psychological resilience and capabilities in EI (Carmeli, 2003). Additionally, previous studies affirmed that students furthering their studies may improve their coping strategies to attain their future career aspirations. The findings and discussion imply that students who are motivated and committed to the process of doing a master's programme in psychology are able to do so if adequate levels of EI and coping are employed.



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## APPENDIX A

### INFORMATION SHEET

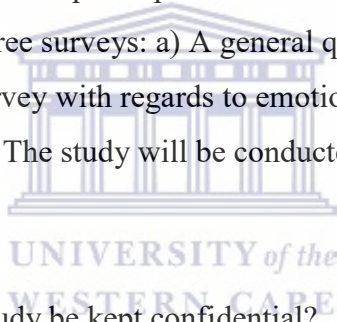
Project Title: Determining levels of coping and emotional intelligence in psychology students at the University of the Western Cape: a quantitative study.

What is this study about?

This is a research project being conducted by Melissa Delport at the University of the Western Cape. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are currently enrolled in the Psychology third year or Honours course at UWC. The purpose of this research project is determine levels of coping and emotional intelligence among students studying psychology.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?

You will be asked to complete three surveys: a) A general questionnaire pertaining demographic information b) a survey with regards to emotional intelligence and c) a survey with regards to coping strategies. The study will be conducted at UWC after class for a maximum duration of one hour.



Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?

The researchers undertake to protect your identity and the nature of your contribution. To ensure your privacy, the surveys are anonymous and will not contain information that may personally identify you. To ensure your confidentiality all data obtained will be kept in locked filing cabinets and storage areas and make us of password-protected computer files. If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected.

What are the risks of this research?

There may be some risks from participating in this research study. Psychological stress may be triggered by this study in that emotional or educational struggles may be highlighted for the participant. All human interactions and talking about self or others carry some amount of risks. We will nevertheless minimise such risks and act promptly to assist you if you experience any discomfort, psychological or otherwise during the process of your

participation in this study. Where necessary, an appropriate referral will be made to a suitable professional for further assistance or intervention.

What are the benefits of this research?

This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the investigator learn more about coping levels in psychology studies. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of their emotional intelligence and the impact this has on coping on third year and post-graduate level of studying and how this could benefit future students completing their studies in the field of psychology.

Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.

What if I have questions?

This research is being conducted by Melissa Delpont (Psychology Department) at the University of the Western Cape. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact Melissa Delpont at: [melissadelport@hotmail.com](mailto:melissadelport@hotmail.com) or +27 21 959 2506. Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Dr. Maria Florence  
Head of Department  
University of the Western Cape  
Private Bag X17  
Bellville 7535  
[mflorence@uwc.ac.za](mailto:mflorence@uwc.ac.za)

Prof Rina Swarts  
Dean of the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences  
University of the Western Cape  
Private Bag X17  
Bellville 7535  
[chs-deansoffice@uwc.ac.za](mailto:chs-deansoffice@uwc.ac.za)

This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Senate Research Committee.

**APPENDIX B**  
**CONSENT FORM**

Title of Research Project:     Determining levels of coping and emotional intelligence in psychology students at the University of the Western Cape: a quantitative study.

The study has been described to me in language that I understand. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand what my participation will involve and I agree to participate of my own choice and free will. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed to anyone. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without fear of negative consequences or loss of benefits.

Participation in the research is not a course requirement.



Participant's name.....

Participant's signature.....

Date.....

UNIVERSITY of the  
WESTERN CAPE

## APPENDIX C

### WAYS OF COPING SCALE

#### Directions:

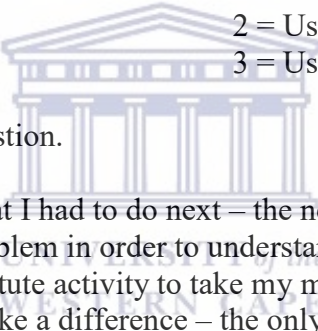
To respond to the statements in this questionnaire, you must have a specific stressful situation in mind. Take a few moments and think about the most stressful situation that you have experienced in the past week. By "stressful" we mean a situation that was difficult or troubling for you, either because you felt distressed about what happened, or because you had to use considerable effort to deal with the situation. The situation may have involved your family, your job, your friends, or something else important to you. Before responding to the statements, think about the details of this stressful situation, such as where it happened, who was involved, how you acted, and why it was important to you. While you may still be involved in the situation, or it could have already happened, it should be the most stressful situation that you experienced during the week.

As you respond to each of the statements, please keep this stressful situation in mind. Read each statement carefully and indicate, by scoring 0, 1, 2 or 3, to what extent you used it in the situation.

0 = Does not apply or not used  
1 = Used somewhat

2 = Used quite a bit  
3 = Used a great deal

Please try to respond to every question.

- 
1. Just concentrated on what I had to do next – the next step.
  2. I tried to analyze the problem in order to understand it better.
  3. Turned to work or substitute activity to take my mind off things.
  4. I felt that time would make a difference – the only thing to do was to wait.
  5. Bargained or compromised to get something positive from the situation.
  6. I did something which I didn't think would work, but at least I was doing something.
  7. Tried to get the person responsible to change his or her mind.
  8. Talked to someone to find out more about the situation.
  9. Criticized or lectured myself.
  10. Tried not to burn my bridges, but leave things open somewhat.
  11. Hoped a miracle would happen.
  12. Went along with fate; sometimes I just have bad luck.
  13. Went on as if nothing had happened.
  14. I tried to keep my feelings to myself.
  15. Looked for the silver lining, so to speak; tried to look on the bright side of things.
  16. Slept more than usual.
  17. I expressed anger to the person(s) who caused the problem.
  18. Accepted sympathy and understanding from someone.
  19. I told myself things that helped me to feel better.
  20. I was inspired to do something creative.



- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. Tried to forget the whole thing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. I got professional help.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. Changed or grew as a person in a good way.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. I waited to see what would happen before doing anything.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. I apologized or did something to make up.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 26. I made a plan of action and followed it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 27. I accepted the next best thing to what I wanted.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 28. I let my feelings out somehow.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 29. Realized I brought the problem on myself.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 30. I came out of the experience better than when I went in.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 31. Talked to someone who could do something concrete about the problem.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 32. Got away from it for a while; tried to rest or take a vacation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 33. Tried to make myself feel better by eating, drinking, smoking, using drugs or medication, etc.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 34. Took a big chance or did something very risky.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 35. I tried not to act too hastily or follow my first hunch.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 36. Found new faith.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 37. Maintained my pride and kept a stiff upper lip.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 38. Rediscovered what is important in life.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 39. Changed something so things would turn out all right.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 40. Avoided being with people in general.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 41. Didn't let it get to me; refused to think too much about it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 42. I asked a relative or friend I respected for advice.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 43. Kept others from knowing how bad things were.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 44. Made light of the situation; refused to get too serious about it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 45. Talked to someone about how I was feeling.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 46. Stood my ground and fought for what I wanted.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 47. Took it out on other people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 48. Drew on my past experiences; I was in a similar situation before.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 49. I knew what had to be done, so I doubled my efforts to make things work.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 50. Refused to believe that it had happened.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 51. I made a promise to myself that things would be different next time.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 52. Came up with a couple of different solutions to the problem.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 53. Accepted it, since nothing could be done.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 54. I tried to keep my feelings from interfering with other things too much.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 55. Wished that I could change what had happened or how I felt.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 56. I changed something about myself.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 57. I daydreamed or imagined a better time or place than the one I was in.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 58. Wished that the situation would go away or somehow be over with.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 59. Had fantasies or wishes about how things might turn out.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 60. I prayed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 61. I prepared myself for the worst.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 62. I went over in my mind what I would say or do.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 63. I thought about how a person I admire would handle this situation and used that as a model.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 64. I tried to see things from the other person's point of view.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 65. I reminded myself how much worse things could be.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 66. I jogged or exercised.

## APPENDIX D

### ASSESSING EMOTIONS SCALE

#### Directions:

Each of the following items asks you about your emotions or reactions associated with emotions. After deciding whether a statement is generally true for you, use the 5-point scale to respond to the statement. Please circle the “1” if you strongly disagree that this is like you, the “2” if you somewhat disagree that this is like you, “3” if you neither agree nor disagree that this is like you, the “4” if you somewhat agree that this is like you, and the “5” if you strongly agree that this is like you. There are no right or wrong answers. Please give the response that best describes you.

**1 = strongly disagree**

**2 = somewhat disagree**

**3 = neither agree nor disagree**

**4 = somewhat agree**

**5 = strongly agree**


- |  |           |
|--|-----------|
| 1. I know when to speak about my personal problems to others.  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. When I am faced with obstacles, I remember times I faced similar obstacles and overcame them.       | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. I expect that I will do well on most things I try.  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. Other people find it easy to confide in me.   | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. I find it hard to understand the non-verbal messages of other people.                               | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6. Some of the major events of my life have led me to re-evaluate what is important and not important. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 7. When my mood changes, I see new possibilities.  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 8. Emotions are one of the things that make my life worth living.                                      | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 9. I am aware of my emotions as I experience them.   | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 10. I expect good things to happen.  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 11. I like to share my emotions with others.   | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 12. When I experience a positive emotion, I know how to make it last.                                  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 13. I arrange events others enjoy.   | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 14. I seek out activities that make me happy.  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 15. I am aware of the non-verbal messages I send to others.  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 16. I present myself in a way that makes a good impression on others.                                  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 17. When I am in a positive mood, solving problems is easy for me.                                     | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 18. By looking at their facial expressions, I recognize the emotions people are experiencing.          | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 19. I know why my emotions change.   | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 20. When I am in a positive mood, I am able to come up with new ideas.                                 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 21. I have control over my emotions.   | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 22. I easily recognize my emotions as I experience them.   | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 23. I motivate myself by imagining a good outcome to   |           |

- |  |           |
|--|-----------|
| tasks I take on.   | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 24. I compliment others when they have done something well.  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 25. I am aware of the non-verbal messages other people send.   | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 26. When another person tells me about an important event in his or her life, I almost feel as though I experienced this event myself. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 27. When I feel a change in emotions, I tend to come up with new ideas.  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 28. When I am faced with a challenge, I give up because I believe I will fail.   | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 29. I know what other people are feeling just by looking at them.  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 30. I help other people feel better when they are down.  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 31. I use good moods to help myself keep trying in the face of obstacles.  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 32. I can tell how people are feeling by listening to the tone of their voice.   | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 33. It is difficult for me to understand why people feel the way they do.  | 1 2 3 4 5 |



## APPENDIX E

### DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION				
<b>DOB</b>				
<b>Relationship Status</b>	Single	Married	Divorced	Widowed
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Black	Coloured	Indian	White
<b>Gender/sex</b>	Male	Female	Transsexual	Other (please specify)
<b>Religious affiliation</b>	Yes (Please specify)	No	Atheist/A-religious	Other (please specify)
<b>Have you applied for psychology Honours prior to your current selection?</b>				
<b>Do you wish to continue with psychology on Master's level?</b>				
<b>If 'yes' in previous question, will you apply during this year?</b>				
<b>How many people do you share your household with?</b>	UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE			
<b>Have any of your family members attended university? Please indicate amount.</b>				
<b>Do you have a job whilst studying?</b>				
<b>How do you fund your studies?</b>				
<b>Are you currently receiving a bursary for this course?</b>				