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| **Department** | Industrial and Organisational Psychology | |
| **Discipline** | Industrial Psychology | |
| **Research Focus Area** | Work-related sense of coherence | |
| **Supervision Team** | Dr NN Bekwa  Prof KP Moalusi  Dr EC Nel  Ms SE Ramasodi  Dr S van der Westhuizen | |
| **Supervision Team details:** | **Academic Profile** | **Capacity** |
| **Dr NN Bekwa**  **[[1]](#footnote-1)(Contact person for this focus area)**  Phone: +2712 429 8203  E-mail: [bekwann@unisa.ac.za](mailto:bekwann@unisa.ac.za) | **Academic Profile**  Nomfusi Bekwa (DCom) is a senior lecturer in the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology, lecturing Research Methodology in under-and post-graduate levels. She has supervised a number of Masters students to completion and started co-supervising Doctoral students. She favours quantitative studies. | **Capacity**  Up to 2 Masters |
| **Prof KP Moalusi**  Phone: +2712 429 8064  E-mail: [moalukp@unisa.ac.za](mailto:moalukp@unisa.ac.za)  ORCID: 0000-0002-7223-1313 | **Academic Profile**  Prof KP Moalusi is an associate professor in Industrial & Organisational Psychology. He has extensive qualitative methods experience. He has published and supervised several qualitative postgraduate research projects. | **Capacity**  Up to 1 Doctorate  Up to 1 Master’s |
| **Dr EC Nel**  Office: NSR3-73  Phone: +2712 429 3409  E-mail: [coetzec1@unisa.ac.za](mailto:coetzec1@unisa.ac.za) | **Academic Profile**  Elzabe Nel (PhD) is a lecturer in the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology, lecturing in under-and post-graduate levels. She has co-supervised Masters students to completion. She favours quantitative studies. | **Capacity**  Up to 2 Masters |
| **Ms SE Ramasodi**  Office: NSR3-73  Phone: +2712 429 2395  [Eramass1@unisa.ac.za](mailto:Eramass1@unisa.ac.za) | **Academic Profile**  Sekgoma Ramasodi (MCom) is a lecturer in the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology, lecturing in under-and post- graduate levels. She is currently registered for DCom and only resumed co-supervising students in 2019. She favours qualitative and quantitative studies. | **Capacity**  Up to 2 Masters |
| **Dr S van der Westhuizen**  [Sanet.westhuiz@gmail.com](mailto:Sanet.westhuiz@gmail.com) | **Academic Profile**  Sanet van der Westhuizen (PhD) has been involved in Higher Education since 2000, lecturing Research Methodology and other Industrial Psychology modules on undergraduate and postgraduate level. Sanet has been doing research in the field of positive psychology for a number of years and has supervised several postgraduate research projects in this field. She favours quantitative studies. | **Capacity**  Up to 3 Masters |
| **Model of Supervision** | Masters’ candidates will be allocated to a supervisor but will be required to work independently within the requirements of higher degree studies. Additionally, students will be guided through online tutoring regarding:   1. Quantitative Research methodology 2. How to write a research proposal 3. Ethics in research 4. Referencing   Doctoral candidates will be allocated to a promoter but will be required to work independently within the requirements of higher degree studies. Additionally, students will be expected to present and motivate their research proposal to a panel of academics for acceptance, before continuing with the actual research project. | |
| **Application procedure** | Apply for a space in this focus area using the **formal UNISA online application procedure** outlined on <https://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/corporate/default>.  Remember you must first apply for a **student number**. | |
| **Selection criteria: Master’s/Doctorate** | Refer to the UNISA application website for general M&D qualification admission criteria. In addition to the admission criteria contained in the *my*Choice brochure, applicants are required to prepare:  **Masters students:** a research outline (max 5 pages) describing the following:   1. A proposed topic and motivation for the study 2. Research problem and objectives 3. A brief review of relevant literature 4. Research design: Motivation for a quantitative or qualitative study 5. Ethics considerations and access to the research context 6. List of references (use APA 7th edition referencing guidelines)   **Doctorate students:**a research outline (max 20 pages) describing the following:   1. A proposed topic and motivation for the study 2. Problem statement and research aims 3. A brief review of relevant literature 4. Research design: Motivation for:    1. a qualitative/ mixed-method choice of study    2. Research participants: Population and sampling strategy    3. Measuring instruments    4. Research procedure    5. Qualitative data analysis 5. Ethics and access to research context 6. Envisaged contribution of the study 7. List of references (use APA 7th edition referencing guidelines)   🖝 To prepare your research outline as required above, **GO TO** the IO Psychology departmental website to **download a research outline guide**:     * **Masters students**: [Apply: Department of IO Psychology/Masters-degrees](https://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/corporate/default/Colleges/Economic-and-Management-Sciences/Schools,-departments,-bureau,-centres-&-institutes/School-of-Management-Sciences/Department-of-Industrial-and-Organisational-Psychology/Masters-degrees) * **Doctorate students:** [Apply: Department of IO Psychology/Doctoral-degrees](https://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/corporate/default/Colleges/Economic-and-Management-Sciences/Schools,-departments,-bureau,-centres-&-institutes/School-of-Management-Sciences/Department-of-Industrial-and-Organisational-Psychology/Doctoral-degrees)   🖝 On the front page indicate the relevant Research Focus Area (RFA) that you are applying for. It must be clear **HOW** your proposed study aligns with the topic and methodological focus of this RFA. | |
| **Selection procedure** | In addition to minimum academic requirements, the following criteria will be applied to assess your research outline:   1. **Relevance to the Research focus area.** 2. **Academic merit of the research topic**: Quality in terms of originality and impact of the topic’s reach and significance toward adults in the African/South African-located work context. Applicants must justify the research problem (in practice and in terms of existing research gaps) and the contribution of the study to advance knowledge in the field. 3. Demonstrate clarity about the **core constructs** and a fair knowledge base of the most recent research. 4. Evidence of **critical thinking**: The candidate’s skills and abilities in analysing, applying, and evaluating information. 5. **Academic writing skills:** The extent to which the research outline convey coherent and well-developed arguments that are supported with relevant evidence; the logically sequence of paragraphs; the use of appropriate diction and sentence structures, and the use of correct grammar, punctuation, spelling and syntax. 6. **Access** to the research context and research participants. | |
| **Documents to support application** | * **Academic Record** * **Proposed research outline** (max 5 pages [masters] or max 20 pages [PhD]) * **One-page** abbreviated **CV** including:   + Academic qualification   + Work experience   + Contact details   + Personal motivation for the study   + Previous research, if any | |
| **Research Scope** | Sense of coherence is defined as a general orientation that reflects an individual’s perception of life as being comprehensible, manageable and meaningful (Antonovsky, 1987). Previous researchers consistently found that individuals with a stronger sense of coherence are healthier in general and cope more efficiently in the work context (Vogt, Jenny, & Bauer, 2013). Antonovsky (1987) was of the opinion that the working environment plays a decisive role in shaping the sense of coherence of an employee. Based on this, Bauer and Jenny (2007) proposed the concept of work-related sense of coherence (Work-SoC) as a context-specific application of sense of coherence. Work-SoC is defined as “the perceived comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness of an individual’s current work situation” (Vogt et al., 2013 p. 1). Subsequent research found Work-SoC to show incremental variance and to be a stronger predictor of work-related stress than sense of coherence (Eberz, Becker, & Antony, 2011). Vogt, Jenny, Füllemann, Inauen and Bauer (2012) developed a nine-item questionnaire measuring the comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness of work and has shown that the scale has a good internal consistency (Cronbach alpha = 0.83). Vogt et al., (2013) also confirmed the construct validity of the Work-SoC and found that the scale’s factor structure remains invariant across different employee groups and across time. Work-SoC serves as an indication of an individual’s perception of the health-related qualities of their current work environment and can be useful in planning and evaluating health-related interventions in an organisation (Vogt et al., 2013). Since this is a newly developed concept, there is currently still a paucity of research on Work-SoC in a South African or African context. This research agenda therefore focuses on addressing methodological, practice and literature gaps with regards to Work-SoC, especially in African or South African settings. | |
| **Reading:**  **Subject Field** | **Further reading over and above these are essential:**  Antonovsky, A. (1987). *Unraveling the mystery of health: How people manage stress and stay well*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.  Eberz, S., Becker, R., & Antoni, C.H. (2011). Kohärenzerleben im Arbeitskontext: Ein nützliches Konstrukt für die ABO-Psychologie? [Work-related sense of coherence – A useful construct for occupational psychology?]. *Zeitschrift für Arbeits- und Organisationspsychologie, 55*, 115–131. http://dx.doi.org/10.1026/0932-4089/ a000056  Ramasodi, S. E. (2016). Work-related sense of coherence: demographical differences and its relationship with work engagement in a motor retail organisation in Gauteng. Unpublished Masters dissertation, University of South Africa, Pretoria.  Van der Westhuizen, S. (2018). Incremental validity of work-related sense of coherence in predicting work wellness. *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology, 44*(0), http://[doi.org/10.4102/sajip.v44i0.1467](https://doi.org/10.4102/sajip.v44i0.1467)  Van der Westhuizen, S., & Ramasodi, E. (2016). Reliability and validity of the Work-related Sense of Coherence Scale for a South African sample. *Journal of Psychology in Africa, 26*(3), 216-220.  Vogt, K., Jenny, G.J., & Bauer, G.F. (2013). Comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness at work: Construct validity of a scale measuring work-related sense of coherence. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology/SA Tydskrif vir Bedryfsielkunde, 39*(1), Art. #1111, 8 pages. http:// dx.doi.org/10.4102/sajip. v39i1.1111 | |
| **Reading:**  **Research Methodology** | **Further reading over and above these are essential:**  Babbie, E. & Mouton, J. (2013). *The practice of social research*. (13th ed.) Cape Town: Oxford University Press.  Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed method approaches*. London: Sage.  Davies, M.B. (2014). [*Doing a successful research project: using qualitative or quantitative methods*](http://oasis.unisa.ac.za/record=b2583491~S1)*.* (2nd ed.). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.  Leedy, P.D., & Ormrod, J.E. (2013). [*Practical research: Planning and Design*](http://oasis.unisa.ac.za/record=b2493999~S1). (10th Ed.). Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Merrill Prentice Hall.  \*Mouton, J. (2001). [*How to succeed in your Masters and Doctoral studies*](http://oasis.unisa.ac.za/record=b2050478~S1)*.* Pretoria: JL van Schaik.  \* Mouton, J. & Marais, H.C. (1990). [*Basic concepts in the methodology of the social sciences*](http://oasis.unisa.ac.za/record=b1954905~S1) (rev. ed.). Pretoria: HSRC.  Trafford, V. & Leshem, S. (2008). [*Stepping stones to achieving your doctorate*](http://oasis.unisa.ac.za/record=b2482506~S1). Berkshire: Open University Press. (E-Book)  \*Classical resources | |
| **Resources: Scholar Community** | South African Journal of Industrial Psychology: [www.sajip.co.za](http://www.sajip.co.za)  South African Journal of Human Resources Management: [www.sajhrm.co.za](http://www.sajhrm.co.za)  Journal of Psychology in Africa:  <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rpia20/current> | |
| **Potential M&D Research Focus**  To be directed by sound literature review as well as availability of research context, participants and data. | | |
| **Unit of Analysis** | **Research Focus** | |
| **Individual** | Aspects that have the strongest influence on Work-SoC. In this regard, the interaction between individual personality, experiences, perceptions and characteristics of the work environment could be investigated. | |
| Longitudinal studies (with e.g. daily-dairy method) to see how Work-SoC might be enhanced or if changes in work characteristics lead to changes in Work-SoC. | |
| How Work-SoC as a personal resource can act as a predictor of outcomes at work like work attitudes, performance and psychological well-being. | |
|  | How Work-SoC as a personal resource can act as a mediator between working conditions, job demands, job resources on the one hand and performance and health outcomes on the other. | |
|  | The measurement properties of the Work-SoC scale in the African or South African context. | |

1. Please note that consulting the research focus area leader is no assurance that your application will be approved. If, however, your application is approved, it is also not a guarantee that he/she will be allocated as your supervisor. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)