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Coping strategies, optimism, and life satisfaction among first-year university students in Italy: gender and age differences / Cristina Cabras ; Marina Mondo

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Abstract

The transition to university appears to be a complex and delicate time in students' lives, involving a sequence of changes regarding both the personal/affective and social/professional spheres, facilitating students' ability to adapt to a new life context. It represents a challenging time that requires students to use adaptive resources to face many changes, including a new academic environment (Park and Adler Health Psychology, 22(6), 627, 2003; Anderson et al. International Journal of Educational Research, 33(4), 325–339, 2000). This paper presents an investigation that focuses on Italian students in transition to university to assess existing gender and age differences in coping strategies and optimism. Furthermore, the study also was designed to explore the impact that coping strategies and optimism have on students' life satisfaction. The sample consists of 298 first-year undergraduate Italian students enrolled in social science courses at the University of Cagliari (Sardinia): 152 (51%) were female and 146 (49%) were male. The ages of the participants ranged from 18 to 37 years, with a mean age of 23.2 years (SD = 3.9) The statistical analysis revealed a strong influence from

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optimism and coping strategies on life satisfaction, as well as an important role played by both gender and age in shaping students' coping strategies, optimism, and life satisfaction. This research could contribute to helping students better face this life transition, thereby increasing life satisfaction and class-attendance levels, improving academic performance, and reducing the number of university dropouts. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Cabras, Cristina, E-Mail: ccabras@unica.it