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A STUDY OF THE CAREER COMMITMENT,  
STRESS LEVELS, AND COPING RESOURCES  
OF MUSICIANS, AND THE INFLUENCE  
OF PERSONALITY

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## ABSTRACT

The present study is an attempt to explore the career commitment, stress, and coping resource issues of musicians, and possible relationships between them. The personality profiles of the musicians are also examined to determine possible interactions with experiences of stress and coping, and career commitment. These areas have not been previously explored within New Zealand, and international research pertaining to the career commitment, stress, coping and personality of musicians is limited. The present study utilised quantitative data, collected through a survey. A questionnaire was distributed to all members of the Auckland Symphony Orchestra and all employees of the Music Education Centre. There were 52 respondents. The questionnaire consisted of three scales, including a commitment scale, the Occupational Stress inventory (OSI), and the NEO PI-R. The participants were grouped according to whether they were a fulltime performer or music teacher, both a teacher and performer, or in one of those groups, but earning their primary income from other work. Results indicated that this sample of musicians were committed to their musical careers. Overall, the musicians did not experience high levels of occupational stress or personal strain, and had good coping resources. It was found that female musicians had significantly greater rational/cognitive coping skills and experienced less vocational strain than did the male musicians. Musicians with a teachers or performers diploma were found to experience significantly less psychological strain than musicians with grade 8. In terms of personality profiles, male musicians were significantly less agreeable and less conscientious than female musicians were, and divorced musicians were found to be significantly more agreeable than single musicians. Individuals with a grade 8 qualification were more neurotic than individuals who have a performers or teachers diploma. The results suggest that this sample of musicians differ from those previously researched in terms of stress, coping, and personality. The key implication of the present study is that analysing musicians in terms of how they structure music into their lives produced the differing results, which given the arguments in the literature, may be more reflective of reality.