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Twenty five years ago Aaron Antonovsky, a medical sociologist, raised the question why some people, in spite of major stressful situations and severe hardships, stayed healthy while others succumbed. As a scientific response he introduced the salutogenic concept of “sense of coherence” as a specific way to view life as comprehensible, manageable and meaningful. He claimed that the way people relate to their life has an influence on their health. Many scientific studies have applied this in practice using the SOCquestionnaire. The present research report gives the evidence base of salutogenic research as measured by Antonovsky’s SOC questionnaire. The review proves that the SOC questionnaire is a valid, reliable instrument for measuring health that also can be applied cross cultures. The SOC has a main, moderating and mediating effect on perceived health and quality of life. The stronger the SOC the better the perceived health and quality of life. The predicting capacity of the SOC is promising. The research synthesis concludes the salutogenic theory to be a valuable approach for public health and health promotion research and practice. The thesis itself can serve as an introduction to the salutogenic research framework and a handbook for the research community.

This research synthesis is a doctoral thesis in social policy at Faculty of Social and Caring Sciences, Department of Social Science/Social Policy, Åbo Akademi University Vasa, Finland. Monica Eriksson is a Researcher at Folkhälsan Research Centre, Health Promotion Research Programme in Helsinki, Finland.

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UNRAVELLING THE MYSTERY OF SALUTOGENESIS

The evidence base of the salutogenic research as measured by Antonovsky’s Sense of Coherence Scale

Monica Eriksson

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"The dissertation makes an important contribution to the dissemination of knowledge about salutogenesis, sense of coherence and its connection to health."

– Maurice Mittelmark, Professor and Immediate Past President of the IUHPE, 2007.

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