

**Family psychosocial well-being in a  
South African context**

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**North-West University  
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# Family psychosocial well-being in a South African context

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Family psychosocial well-being in a South African context

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**“God sets the lonely in families” Psalm 68:6. For me, family is a shelter, the home you can always go to. It is to know there is always someone there for you, someone to go to in the best of times and in the worst of times. It is my father’s sense of humor, his love for music and the way he smiles. It is the way my mother always understands and her perfect words at perfect times, her strength and energy. It is my grandmother’s infectious laugh and the way she smells when she envelopes me in a hug. It is my grandfather’s unique ways and his unshakable faith. It is these things, moments and memories that make the good days extraordinary and the bad days easier to get through. My family is not perfect, but we have shared many perfect moments. This is for my family – you are all special and dear to me.**

**I love you.**

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# Summary

“The family is the building block of society. It is a nursery, a school, a hospital, a leisure centre, a place of refuge and rest. It encompasses the whole of society. It fashions our beliefs; it is the preparation for the rest of our life,” Margaret Thatcher (1988). We are all well aware of the important role of family in people’s lives, we know it can affect you, empower you, or break you. Many studies and research has sought to define the role and influence of family in every which way, but truthfully, we can never know enough and we will never know everything. As human beings, we constantly strive for more – more knowledge, more understanding, and more insight. But the family, in essence, is a mystery; a far too complex and unique system that cannot be broken down into simple numbers or words. It is this that inspired me to do this study – although we can never know everything, we can always know more. This study therefore aimed to investigate the psychosocial well-being of a group of families and from the findings obtained, develop a conceptual framework and a model for psychosocial well-being of families from diverse cultures in a South African context.

The research method consisted of two stages namely, stage one: a multi-method approach using quantitative and qualitative research for theory generation, and stage two: formulation of a conceptual framework and visual model. The first phase consisted of a quantitative research design with a sample size of 772 participants. The aim of the first phase was to determine the prevalence of psychosocial well-being in families and to identify families who report high, moderate and low levels of psychosocial well-being, using validated psychological instruments. The second aim of the quantitative phase was to propose a measurement model to assess family psychosocial well-being in a South African context. The second phase consisted of a qualitative, explorative research design used to understand and describe aspects that contribute to the psychosocial well-being of families from diverse cultures in a South African context, by analysing the storied (narrative) experiences ( $N = 23$ ), drawings ( $N = 14$ ) and family interviews ( $N = 36$ ) of identified families who reported psychosocial well-being or less thereof, in the first phase of the study (Creswell, 2003). These findings were then utilized to develop a conceptual

framework followed and a model for the psychosocial well-being of families in a South African context.

The findings from the first, quantitative phase show a rather small group of participants who report high levels of family psychosocial well-being, while the majority falls within the low and moderate ranges, and approximately 64% of the participants are not experiencing optimal psychosocial well-being. The results support a two-factor model of family psychosocial well-being consisting of family functioning and family feelings. Family functioning included family relational patterns, family functioning style and family hardiness while the second factor, family feelings, included family satisfaction and attachment.

The findings from the qualitative phase suggest that communication, mutual support, togetherness as a family and spirituality are the most prominent contributing factors, whilst financial difficulties and interpersonal conflicts or arguments are the most prominent hindering factors with regard to family psychosocial well-being in this group of participants. These findings were utilized to develop a conceptual framework and a model for the psychosocial well-being of families from diverse cultures in a South African context that can be used in future research and in the development of programmes to enhance the psychosocial well-being of South African families.

**Key words: Psychosocial well-being, South African families, well-being**



# Opsomming

“Die familie is die boublokke van die samelewing. Dit is ‘n kleuterskool, ‘n skool, ‘n hospitaal, ‘n ontspanningsentrum, ‘n plek van toevlug en rus. Dit sluit die totaal van die samelewing in. Dit vorm ons geloof; dit is die voorbereiding vir die res van ons lewens,” Margaret Thatcher (1988). Ons is almal bewus van die belangrike rol van die gesin in mense se lewens, ons weet dit kan jou beïnvloed, jou bemagtig, of jou breek. Baie studies en navorsing het gepoog om die rol en invloed van die gesin volledig te definieer op elke moontlike wyse, maar om eerlik te wees sal ons nooit genoeg weet nie en sal ons nooit alles weet nie. As mense is ons konstant besig om na meer te streef – meer kennis, meer begrip, en meer insig. Maar die gesin is in wese ‘n misterie; ‘n heeltemal te komplekse en unieke sisteem wat nie gereduseer kan word tot eenvoudige nommers en woorde nie. Dit is wat my geïnspireer het om hierdie studie te doen – al kan ons nooit alles weet nie, kan ons altyd meer weet. Hierdie studie het beoog om die psigososiale welstand van ‘n groep families te bestudeer en uit die bevindinge ‘n konseptuele raamwerk en model vir die psigososiale welstand van families van diverse kulture in ‘n Suid-Afrikaanse konteks te ontwikkel.

Die navorsingsmetode het uit twee stadiums bestaan naamlik stadium een: ‘n multi-metode benadering met kwantitatiewe en kwalitatiewe navorsing vir teorie generering, en stadium twee: formulering van ‘n konseptuele raamwerk en visuele model. Die eerste fase het uit ‘n kwantitatiewe navorsingsontwerp bestaan met ‘n steekproefgrootte van 772 deelnemers. Die doel van die eerste fase was om die voorkoms van psigososiale welstand in families te bepaal en om families te identifiseer wat hoë, matige en lae vlakke van psigososiale welstand gerapporteer het deur die gebruik van gevalideerde vraelyste. Die tweede doel van die kwantitatiewe fase was om ‘n meetingsmodel voor te stel om families se psigososiale welstand in ‘n Suid-Afrikaanse konteks te meet. Die tweede fase het uit ‘n kwalitatiewe, verkennende navorsingsontwerp bestaan wat gebruik is om aspekte wat bydra tot die psigososiale welstand van families van diverse kulture in ‘n Suid-Afrikaanse konteks te verstaan en te beskryf, deur die narratiewe ervarings ( $N = 23$ ), sketse ( $N = 14$ ) en familie onderhoude ( $N = 36$ ) van geïdentifiseerde families wat

psigososiale welstand of minder daarvan gerapporteer het in die eerste fase van die studie, te ontleed (Crewell, 2003). Hierdie bevindinge is gebruik om 'n konseptuele raamwerk en 'n model vir die psigososiale welstand van families in 'n Suid-Afrikaanse konteks te ontwikkel.

Die bevindinge van die eerste, kwantitatiewe fase wys dat 'n relatief klein groep van respondente hoë vlakke van psigososiale gesinswelstand rapporteer, terwyl die meerderheid in die lae en gematigde vlakke val en aandui dat ongeveer 64% van die respondente nie optimale psigososiale welstand ervaar nie. Die bevindinge ondersteun 'n twee-faktor model van gesinne se psigososiale welstand wat uit gesinsfunksionering en gesinsgevoelens bestaan. Gesinsfunksionering het gesinsverhoudingspatrone, gesinsfunksioneringstyl en gesinsgehardheid ingesluit, terwyl die tweede faktor, gesinsgevoelens, gesinssatisfaksie en gehegtheid ingesluit het.

Die bevindinge van die kwalitatiewe fase dui daarop dat kommunikasie, onderlinge ondersteuning, saamwees as 'n gesin en spiritualiteit die mees prominente bydraende faktore is, terwyl finansiële probleme en interpersoonlike konflik of argumente die mees prominente verhinderende of belemmerde faktore is ten opsigte van gesinne se psigososiale welstand in die groep van respondente. Hierdie bevindinge is gebruik om 'n konseptuele raamwerk en 'n model vir die psigososiale welstand van gesinne van diverse kulture in 'n Suid-Afrikaanse konteks te ontwikkel wat gebruik kan word in navorsing en programme om die psigososiale welstand van Suid-Afrikaanse gesinne te bevorder.

**Sleutelwoorde: Psigososiale welstand, Suid-Afrikaanse gesinne, welstand**

# Letter of Permission



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18 April 2012

**Letter of permission.**

Permission is hereby granted that the following three manuscripts:

1. Psychosocial well-being of families from diverse cultures in a South African context;
2. Hearing their voices: Narratives and discussions of families' psychosocial well-being in a South African context;
3. A model for the psychosocial well-being of families in a South African context,

may be submitted by Vicki Koen for the purpose of obtaining a PhD-degree in Psychology. This is in accordance with academic rule A.8, and specifically rule A.8.2.b of the North-West University.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'C. van Eeden'.

Promoter: Prof. C. van Eeden

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# Declaration of Language Editing

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### DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING

I, Christina Maria Etrechia Terblanche, id nr 771105 0031 082, hereby declare that I have edited the doctoral thesis in article format of Vicki Koen entitled **FAMILY PSYCHOSOCIAL WELL-BEING IN A SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT**, without viewing the final product.

Regards,

CME Terblanche

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