

An exploration of social workers' perceptions of family well-being and the balance between work and family domains

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It all starts here TM



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OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie is 'n sub-studie van die projek met die titel “*A multi-disciplinary programme to enhance family well-being in different South African contexts: Phase one.*” Een van die doelwitte van die projek is om gesinswelstand in verskillende Suid-Afrikaanse kontekste te ondersoek, verken en te beskryf. Die doel van hierdie studie is om maatskaplike werkers (in die algemeen) se persepsies van die werk-gesin balans en gesinswelstand te ondersoek en te beskryf vanuit 'n Positiewe Sielkunde standpunt.

Navorsing regverdig hierdie doel deur aandag te vestig op die talle sosiale, politieke en ekonomiese uitdagings in Suid-Afrika oor die afgelope twintig jaar, met die gevolg dat beide die werk en sosiale omgewings van baie Suid-Afrikaners meer uitdagend en stresvol geword het. Gesinne waar albei ouers/voogde werk, wat ook bekend staan as dubbele-inkomste gesinne, het oor die laaste dekade toegeneem ten einde in families se finansiële behoeftes te voorsien, met die gevolg dat beide mans en vroue se verantwoordelikheid by die huis en werk drasties toeneem. Vervolgens, moedig die ontwikkeling van tegnologie langer werksure aan en individue moet nou ook langer afstande reis om by die werk uit te kom. As gevolg hiervan kan die grense tussen werk en familie lewe onduidelik word en kan dit uitdagend word vir individue om hierdie twee lewensdomeine te balanseer, sonder om die gesinsinstelling te bedreig. Ten einde 'n optimale funksionerende samelewing, individue- en gesinswelstand te bevorder en te verseker, is dit belangrik om 'n balans tussen werk en gesinslewe te vind en te handhaaf. Met in agneming dat maatskaplike werkers die verantwoordelikhede en/of kennis in hierdie verband het, opgelei is om maatskaplike verandering te bevorder, opgelei is om te help met probleemoplossing in menslike verhoudings, opgelei is in die bemagtiging en bevryding van mense te verseker ten einde

welstand te bevorder, is maatskaplike werkers geïdentifiseer om as deelnemers vir hierdie studie op te tree.

'n Kwalitatiewe navorsingsontwerp is geïmplementeer en die studie maak gebruik van 'n narratiewe ondersoek. 'n Doelgerigte of sneeubal-/netwerk steekproefnemingstegniek is geïmplementeer. 13 vroulike maatskaplike werkers ($n = 13$) tussen die ouderdomme van 23 en 46 wat in verskillende sosiale werk kontekste regoor Suid-Afrika werk is in die navorsing ingesluit. Data is ingesamel deur middel van geskrewe narratiewe, waarna dit tematies geanaliseer is. Die resultate beskryf maatskaplike werkers se persepsies van werk-gesin balans, maatskaplike werkers se persepsies van hoe werk-gesin balans potensieel kan bydra tot gesinswelstand, en strategieë wat maatskaplike werkers beskou as effektief om bekend te stel aan werk-gesin balans wat potensieel kan bydra tot gesinswelstand. Die belangrikheid en betekenis van die studie lê in die feit dat die kennis van maatskaplike werkers met betrekking tot werk-gesin balans en gesinswelstand in hul professionele hoedanigheid bydra tot ons begrip en kennis van werk-gesin balans en die studie het die potensiaal om 'n blywende invloed te hê op gesinswelstand in 'n Suid-Afrikaanse konteks. Die bevindinge kan ook bydra tot die uitbreiding van die teoretiese kennis van werk-gesin balans binne 'n Suid-Afrikaanse konteks en die geïdentifiseerde strategieë kan effektief bydra tot die bevordering van gesinswelstand.

Sleutelwoorde: Familie, welstand, werk-gesin balans, maatskaplike werk, maatskaplike werker/s

SUMMARY

This study is a sub-study of the project entitled “*A multi-disciplinary programme to enhance family well-being in different South African contexts: Phase one*”. One of the objectives of the project is to explore and describe family well-being in different South African contexts. The aim of this study is to explore and describe social workers’ perceptions (in general) of work-family balance and family well-being from a Positive Psychology standpoint.

Research justifying this aim indicates that as a result of the numerous social, political, and economic challenges in South Africa in the last twenty years, both the work and social environments of South Africans have become more challenging and stressful. Families where both parents/guardians work, also known as dual earning/income families, are steadily increasing in order to provide financially for families and both men and women increasingly have responsibilities at home and at work. Furthermore, the development of technology encourages longer working hours and individuals often have to travel long distances to get to work. As a result of this, the boundaries between work and family can become unclear and individuals may find it challenging to balance these domains thereby endangering the institution of family. In order to promote a well-functioning society, individual- and family well-being, it is important to find and maintain a balance between work and family-life. Considering that social workers have responsibilities and/or knowledge in this regard and are trained to promote social change, to help with problem solving in human relationships, and empowerment and liberation of people in order to enhance well-being, social workers were identified as participants.

In order to reach the aim of the study as identified above, a qualitative, narrative inquiry research design was used. A purposive or snowball/network sampling technique was

implemented. 13 female social workers (n = 13) between the ages of 23 and 46 who work in different social work contexts across South Africa were included in the research. Data were collected by means of written narratives and analysed with the use of thematic analysis. The results describe social workers' perceptions of work-family balance; social workers' perceptions of how work-family balance can potentially contribute to family well-being; and strategies that social workers regard as effective to introduce to work-family balance that can potentially contribute to family well-being. The significance of the study lies in the fact that social workers' knowledge with regard to work-family balance and family well-being in their professional capacity contributes to our understanding and knowledge of work-family balance and has the potential to contribute to family well-being in a South African context. The findings can also contribute to the expansion of theoretical knowledge of work-family balance within a South African context and identifies strategies that may be effective in order to introduce work-family balance that could potentially contribute to family well-being.

Key words: Family, well-being, work-family balance, social work, social worker/s

PERMISSION TO SUBMIT MANUSCRIPT FOR EXAMINATION PURPOSES

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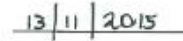
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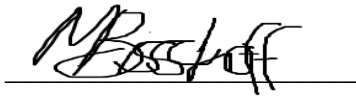
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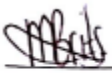
Hereby I, Marlice Bisschoff, declare that this research study; *An exploration of social workers' perceptions of family well-being and the balance between work and family domains*, is a product of my own work, and that all sources have been fully referenced and acknowledged. Furthermore, I declare that this dissertation was edited by a qualified and experienced language editor.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MBisschoff', is written over a horizontal line.

Marlice Bisschoff

DECLARATION BY THE LANGUAGE EDITOR

I hereby declare that I have language-edited the study entitled “An exploration of social workers' perceptions of family well-being and the balance between work and family domains” in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree MA Positive Psychology.

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M. Brits

Professional Language Editor

PREFACE

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree MA in Positive Psychology. The Positive Psychology Curriculum (curriculum code G801P) consists of a total of 180 credits. Of these credits the research dissertation in Positive Psychology, although currently registered as a dissertation, accounts for only a third of these credits (60 credits).

This dissertation is presented in an article format in line with the General Academic Rules of the North-West University (NWU, 2015). The first section of the dissertation provides a short literature review and problem statement. The second section provides the guidelines of the journal that the manuscript will be submitted to and the manuscript itself. The third and final section includes the conclusions of the study.

The manuscript will be submitted to the *Journal of Community, Work and Family* for possible publication. This journal publishes original articles on the links between community, work and family by drawing these aspects together with a focus on theory, research, policy and practice. The research topic therefore accords with the journal's aim and scope.

SECTION 1

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following sections will explicate background information on models explaining work and family life, work-family balance, the social work perspective with regard to these domains, and family well-being. Work and family represent the most important life domains of adulthood for most individuals worldwide and is also considered to be the backbone of human existence (Md-Sidin, Sambasivan, & Ismail, 2008). The work and family domains, and by implication work-family balance, are informed by a person's occupation, a person's socio-economic issues, and the cultural context in which a person lives (Md-Sidin et al., 2008). The following section provides an overview of the five main models used to explain the relationship between work and family life.

Models Explaining Work and Family Life

Five main models are prominently used to explain the relationship between work and family life (Guest, 2002; Naithani, 2010; O'Driscoll, 1996). The models are the segmentation-, spillover-, compensation-, instrumental- and conflict model, which are discussed in more detail below.

The segmentation model views work and life (non-work) as two separate and distinct life domains that do not influence each other (Blunsdon, Blyton, Reed, & Dastmalchian, 2006). Segmentation refers to separation, indicating that some individuals prefer to keep roles within the work and family domain separate (Rothbard, Phillips, & Dumas, 2005). The desire for segmentation exists due to the fact that segmentation allows individuals to completely focus on and develop the role of one life domain at a time. Keeping work and family roles separate, allows individuals to cope with the demands and responsibilities of these roles more effectively and to be fully devoted to it

(Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Lambert 1990). The segmentation model proposes that separating work and family roles helps to protect individuals from being exposed to high levels of stress, emotional strains and extreme psychological mood swings (Rothbard et al., 2005). Segmentation acts as a buffer against the spillover of negative experiences and emotions from the family domain to the work domain and vice versa. Furthermore, it limits interruption from different life domains and permits individuals the freedom to exclusively focus on roles of the significant life domains (Rothbard & Edwards, 2003). The segmentation model therefore highlights the fact that there should be clear boundaries between different life domains and that these boundaries reduce interruptions from work to family and family to work (Rothbard et al., 2005).

The spillover model (Staines, 1980) explains the manner in which demands and/or strains are transferred from one domain to another and vice versa despite the physical and temporal boundaries between work and family life. Behaviours, responsibilities and emotions in one domain therefore have a direct impact in the opposite domain. For example, if a person experiences a stressful day at work, it is likely that this person will go home in a bad mood as a result. Bakker and Demerouti (2012) explain that role pressure and expectations at work affects optimal functioning at home and that role pressure at home influences ideal functioning at work. This leads to conflict between the domains of work and family life. Furthermore, variables such as high work demands, work-role overload, long working hours, emotional strains and unpleasant interactions with people, have a negative effect on the individual and are found to be predictors of conflict between work and family domains. The model therefore perceives the two domains (work and family) as being able to influence each other in a positive or negative manner (Naithani, 2010; Pleck, 1977).

According to the role scarcity hypothesis (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000), individuals have limited and fixed resources such as time and energy. People are devoted to and manage multiple

roles, with the result being that they draw on the same scarce resources. This may cause additional challenges in the two life domains of work and family. Bakker and Demerouti (2012) further explain that people with high work demands devote more time and energy to their work, leaving them with less resources to devote to their families. To meet the demands and requirements of one life domain becomes more difficult as the result of the amount of time and energy already devoted to another life domain. As a consequence of high work demands, negative spillover can therefore manifest in the family domain, which interferes with the demands and responsibilities of family life (Bakker & Demerouti, 2012).

On the other hand, positive spillover can be experienced between different life domains through inter-role management (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Positive spillover is described as the degree to which experiences and involvement in one role improve the satisfaction with, and quality of life in another role. The result of positive spillover is linked with resources such as autonomy, social support as well as performance and productivity within the work domain. (Bakker & Demerouti, 2012; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

The expansion hypothesis (Marks, 1977), explains that involvement in multiple roles provides several opportunities and resources which individuals can utilise to foster personal growth and optimal functioning in different life domains. The spillover model not only focuses on the resources in their totality, but also their accumulation and distributions and the interaction between different life domains (Muster & Schrader, 2011). In support of positive spillover, *the enrichment model*, in contrast to the conflict model described below, does not only focus on equally distributing resources, but on resource accumulation through a variety of roles (Rothbard, 2001). It is proposed that each life domain demands multiple requirements, which can have a positive effect on one another. It is also proposed that having multiple roles enriches and develops the lives of people.

Optimally, the resources and experiences gained through multiple roles in the work and family domains should enhance and facilitate role performance in different life domains (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Muster & Schrader, 2011).

The compensational model hypothesises that a lack of demand and/or satisfaction in one domain can be achieved in the other domain (Staines, 1980). According to Lambert (1990) the compensation model explains that experiences and involvement in one life domain can, for instance, lead to inconsistency as well as contradictory and opposing behaviour in another domain. Compensational efforts are made when individuals are not satisfied or content with experience in a certain life domain. This leads to lesser involvement in the unpleasant domain and higher involvement in the satisfying and pleasant domain (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Lambert, 1990; Muster & Schrader, 2011). Compensation can also be attained due to dissatisfaction in one life domain and by pursuing additional sustaining, pleasing and satisfying experiences in another domain (Muster & Schrader, 2011).

According to *the instrumental model*, activities in one domain are seen to facilitate success in the other domain (O'Driscoll, 1996). Individuals working and living according to the instrumental model will pursue maximum earnings and rewards, even at the cost of a job that has fixed routines, long working hours, or is emotionally challenging, in order to fully provide in their family's needs (for example, to be able to financially support a family and to be able to purchase a house, a car, medical aid, etc.) (Guest, 2002). Inter-role enrichment (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) can be stimulated and improved via one of two pathways, namely the 1) instrumental- and 2) affective pathway. The instrumental pathway is followed when resources such as skills and opportunities improve self-growth. This happens when one role has a direct impact on another role and through this impact, improves optimal functioning. The affective pathway is followed when resources in one

life domain promote positive affect (such as positive energy and emotions in a specific life domain) to such an extent that it improves individual functioning in another life domain (Bakker & Demerouti, 2012).

The conflict model theorises that, as a result of high levels of demand in all spheres of life, conflicts may arise that can significantly challenge a person (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Guest 2002). Muster and Schrader (2011) explain the conflict model by emphasising that requirements and responsibilities of one life domain is too difficult to merge with another life domain. This is due to the fact that resources such as time and energy are limited. The fact that resources are unequally consumed in the different life domains, leads to inter-role conflict, especially within the roles of work and family life (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). The conflict varies from time-, emotional- and behaviour-related strains and occurs in two ways – (i) when work interferes with family life it leads to negative outcomes within the family domain and (ii) when family interferes with work it leads to negative outcomes within the work domain (Muster & Schrader, 2011). Leading theories with regard to the work-life relationship are discussed next.

The role accumulation theory implies that multiple roles (in the work and family domain) promote positive and beneficial experiences by providing learning opportunities which may enhance well-being (Sieber, 1974). Role accumulation can have beneficial effects on psychological and physical well-being, especially when roles (in the work and family domain) are of high quality and are experienced in a positive manner. Satisfaction in both work and family roles are found to have a positive effect on happiness, life satisfaction and overall quality of life (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

It is also found that one can benefit by being involved in and fulfilling multiple roles. This could buffer stress as experienced in the fulfilment of one role by having successes in another role. Thereby, creating increased opportunities for social support as well as opportunities to expand one's

frame of reference. Experiences in one role can create and enhance positive experiences and outcomes in another role. The transferal of positive experiences from one role to another is encouraged in order to create a flow of energy between different roles (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). The multiple roles of work and family are therefore seen as spheres that overlap to create synergy rather than spheres that create conflict (Stewart & Donald, 2006). In addition, individuals can benefit from role accumulation as they learn to be more tolerant of contradictory views/opinions and learn to be more flexible in adjusting to the demands and requirements of multiple roles (Sieber, 1974). The role accumulation theory is able to encourage work-family balance to the extent to which a person's experiences of one role, improves the meaning and quality of life experienced in another role (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Work-family balance thus occurs when work- and family experiences improve individuals' overall well-being and quality of life.

Research on work-family balance is relevant as work-family conflict can develop if the two life domains are not balanced, which in turn can lead to emotional exhaustion (Akintayo, 2010). Work-family conflict can develop as a consequence of the inter-role conflict in which work demands most of one's time and energy. The *role stress theory* explains that the incompatibility of multiple work and family role responsibilities can cause conflict that creates negative work and personal outcomes (De Villiers & Kotze, 2003). According to De Villiers and Kotze (2003), work-family conflict leads to consequences of role conflict, role overload and role interference. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) describe role conflict as the simultaneous occurrence of different sets of pressure. They explain that conflict arises when compliance to one pressure, makes it difficult to comply with another in the same way. Role conflict refers to the combined demands of the different roles a person has to fulfil, taking into consideration that, in some way, they are incompatible, thereby causing conflict between the demands and responsibilities of these different roles. Involvement and

participation in one role therefore makes involvement and participation in another role difficult (De Villiers & Kotze, 2003).

Role conflict is said to occur as a result of role overload. For example, when a person has to fulfil various roles and responsibilities in both life domains (work and family life), but cannot cope with the combined demands of the different roles, it leads to role-interference. Requirements from the work role can therefore interfere with the demands and responsibilities of the non-work roles (roles within the family domain) (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). A distinction is made between two directions of role interference - work to family interference and family to work interference (Fu & Shaffer, 2001). The determinant factors for the first type of role interference arise from the work domain, whereas determinant factors of family to work interference arises from the family domain. Following the theory of role stress, the implication is that when work and family responsibilities are incompatible and conflict arises between these two life domains, it can cause negative work and personal outcomes. The following figure (see Figure 1) provides an overview of the models and theories discussed above and also includes the work-family border theory (Clark, 2000), which is discussed in more detail below.

Segmentation model	•Views work and life as two separate domains that do not influence each other
Spillover model	•What happens in one domain can have a direct impact on the other domain
Compensational model	•A lack of satisfaction in one domain can be achieved in the other domain
Instrumental model	•Activities in one domain can facilitate success in the other domain
Conflict model	•Inequality of resources spent in different life domains can lead to conflict between work and family life
Role accumulation theory	•Having/fulfilling multiple roles can enhance well-being, etc.
Role stress theory	•Incompatibility of multiple work and family roles can create conflict that can have negative work and personal outcomes
Work-family border theory	•People can negotiate their work and family domains/borders between them in order to achieve a healthy balance

Figure 1. Overview of most prominent models and theories of work-family interaction

It can be deduced from the discussion above that the research supporting all of the models and theories discussed highlights the fact that the work and family domains are interconnected. Therefore a need for balance between these domains is vital (Clark, 2000). Work and family life is seen as interdependent but due to changes in society and increased employment, more women are entering the workforce and men also seem to take on more responsibilities at home (Clark, 2000), which can add to potential experiences of role conflict. According to the 16th Annual CEO survey released by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC, 2014), approximately 552 million women have joined the global workforce between 1980 and 2008 and a further 1 billion are expected to do so in the next ten years. The South African Board for People Practices Women's Report for 2011 (SABPP, 2011) indicates that since the end of Apartheid, various jobs have been created to aid, amongst others, gender transformation and that work plays an increasingly important role in the lives and empowerment of South African women. The fact that both men and women have more

responsibilities both at home and at work (Clark, 2000), increasingly supports the view that the work and family domain cannot be separated, that both men and women have roles and responsibilities to fulfil, and that there is a need to find a balance between these two domains (Clark, 2000).

Some researchers indicate that the repeated negative focus on work and family life that can, for example, be viewed in the conflict model, has hindered the understanding that being involved in both work and family roles can enhance individual and family well-being (Donald & Linington, 2008; Sieber 1974). Based on the work-family border theory (Clark, 2000) and other models discussed above that support the beneficial role of having responsibilities in both of these domains, in this research it is postulated that having various roles could enable positive experiences and provide individuals the opportunity to learn from different role responsibilities that may be beneficial for mental and physical well-being. The success and satisfaction of upholding with and balancing role responsibilities provides opportunities for social support (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Stewart & Donald, 2006). It also provides opportunities to find meaning in and quality of life by experiencing success in multiple roles (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Stewart & Donald, 2006).

Work-Family Balance

The term “work-family balance” is defined as the degree to which a person perceives an experience of positive relationships in both work and family roles and where their relationships are in balance or compatible with each other (Michigan State University, 2015). The implication of this is that, instead of viewing work-family roles as conflicting, work-family balance suggests that people are in fact able to (and should) have a balanced approach to these roles and should aim to be equally and positively committed to both roles (Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw, 2003; Mead 1964). It is also important to note that it is not always possible to be equally devoted to the different roles in

both domains, but that seeking meaningful and pleasant experiences in work and family life is a starting point in balancing responsibilities and different roles in these domains. Research also suggests that being involved in multiple roles can prevent negative experiences resulting from being involved or over-involved in only one role (Carlson, Kacmar, Wayne, & Grzywacz, 2006). A positively balanced involvement in work and family role responsibilities may reduce work stress and negative work performance as well as work-family conflict (Greenhaus et al., 2003).

One of the most prominent work-family balance theories, Clark's (2000) *work-family border theory*, explains how people negotiate their work and family domains and the borders between these domains in order to achieve balance. In this theory, the meaning of work and family differs in terms of purpose and culture due to social and economic change. Therefore transgression between work and family life is required in order to maintain a balance. Transgression between these two life domains is easier for individuals with a clear focus, goal setting and interpersonal style of adapting to and balancing responsibilities. Although the dynamics and complexity of work and family life may differ from one individual to another, work and family life may, to some degree, be modified to border and create a desired balance.

As the distinction between work-family conflict and work-family balance mentioned earlier in this discussion suggests, work-family balance refers to a positive and healthy balance between work and family life. The term will be used as such for the purpose of this study. Considering that social workers have responsibilities and/or knowledge in this regard and are trained to promote social change, to help with problem solving in human relationships, and empowerment and liberation of people in order to enhance well-being, the social work perspective is relevant.

The Social Work Perspective

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) (2014) defines social work as a practiced-based profession and academic discipline that promotes social change and develops social cohesion, assists with problem solving in human relationships and focuses on the empowerment and liberation of people. The social work profession promotes the principles of social justice such as human rights and collective responsibilities, whereby respect for diversities is central to social work (White Paper for Social Welfare, 1997). Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people, structures to address life challenges and enhance well-being. It is therefore a social worker's professional responsibility to promote well-being in every area of human life, including family life (White Paper for Social Welfare, 1997). Social workers assist in providing answers and assistance with regards to social problems by working directly with individuals, families and communities. This is done in order to advocate social change and by promoting the well-being and optimal social functioning of clients (individuals, families and communities) (Rogowski, 2011).

According to the Department of Social Development (2013), the White Paper on Families in South Africa explain that families receive little attention in the social science sphere with the result that there are little empirical data to provide a picture and explain effective family functioning. The White Paper for Social Welfare (1997) therefore explains the important role social workers play, by focusing on and working towards the family's best interest, by caring for them in a professional manner and promoting their well-being in order for the family unit to function optimally. By implementing social programmes and promoting a balance between protective, preventative- and developmental services, social workers are able to build capacity as well as provide support services

in order to enhance suitable people-orientated and developmental strategies that will help improve the well-being of individuals and families.

The promotion of family well-being is important as families are affected by socio-economic, environmental, technological and political change (Md-Sidin et al., 2008; White Paper for Social Welfare, 1997). The growing sub-culture of violence among people in society as well as increasing change in the traditional roles of men and women contributes to change in family structures, affecting the capacity for families to function optimally (White Paper for Social Welfare, 1997). Increase of job demands, changing and challenging social expectations as well as increase in work infiltrating homes, can lead to less time being available to nurture and develop family relationships (De Villiers & Kotze, 2003; Kalliath & Kalliath, 2013). Social services and therapeutic interventions are therefore rendered to promote the effective functioning of family units in order to ensure family well-being and stability within the family (White Paper for Social Welfare, 1997).

The South African Council for Social Service Profession (SACSSP, 2015), explains the scope of practice of social workers. According to the council (SACSSP, 2015), social work is a dynamic profession practiced in different settings. These settings include government departments, non-government organisations (NGO), family and marriage societies, youth services, disability settings, schools, and the corporate sector. According to the SACSSP (2015) social workers generally operate in a multi-disciplinary team to enhance the well-being of individuals (micro-level), families, groups (mezzo-level) and communities (macro-level). Social workers working in various settings are trained to address multiple and complex relations between individuals and their environments in order to promote well-being, develop strengths and unlock potential (SACSSP, 2015). Social workers' training does not only focus on identifying and solving problems, but also focuses on preventing problems by implementing strength-based interventions (SACSSP, 2015).

Social workers are trained to conduct research as well as utilise multiple skills, techniques and interventions in a holistic manner. The goal is to promote well-being and positive change when rendering individual counselling, group work, family therapy and render enduring services to communities. Social workers are tasked to assist and empower individuals, families and communities in order to promote social responsibilities as well as to improve social functioning, task accomplishment and effective resource use (SACSSP, 2015).

Also part of social work training is to learn and apply a strengths-based perspective, whereby social workers view people as resourceful, resilient and capable to manage adversity (Corcoran, 2011). Thus, the social work profession does not only focus on peoples' problems, limitations, or pathology, but is also aligned with a positive psychology perspective. Such a perspective focuses on identifying and applying skills and strategies to enhance the quality of human functioning, aims to discover and promote aspects for individuals to thrive (Corcoran, 2011; Wissing, 2014) and contributes to family well-being. Therefore social workers' perceptions regarding work-family balance and family well-being in general is explored for the purpose of this study.

Family Well-Being

Well-being is an important and meaningful concept in describing optimal functioning and quality of life. It is not merely the absence of illness, but rather a state of physical, psychological, emotional and social health that focuses on existing strengths and resources (Wissing, 2014). Seligman (2011) indicates five aspects of individual well-being that will ultimately contribute to the optimal functioning and well-being of the family. These aspects are positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning in life and achievements. A holistic view of well-being includes both the eudemonic (living a meaningful life) and hedonic (enjoying a pleasant life) perspectives.

Zimmerman (2013) explains that optimal well-being of individuals will encourage well-being within families and vice versa. It is important to note, however, that an individual (and his/her experience of well-being) cannot be viewed in isolation and therefore needs to be viewed within his/her larger context (family, culture, community, etc.) (Koen, Van Eeden, & Rothmann, 2012).

Regarding the conceptualisation of the term “family”, the family as an institution is considered multi-dimensional, as it is affected by and has an effect on various social, economic, political and cultural institutions which influence the structure of society (Amoateng & Richter, 2007). In South Africa, with its rich diversity, different family forms and structures are observed in society (Greeff, 2013). In South Africa families do not only consist of the traditional nuclear family that includes married men and women and their children, but also includes biological families, blended families and single-parent families (Greeff, 2013). A family can consist of a group of individuals who are blood relatives, emotionally connected, people caring for extended family and/or united by material possessions (Greeff, 2013). For the purpose of this study, the term “family” will therefore refer to a multi-dimensional institution consisting of two or more people who are either related by blood, have emotional connections, care for extended family and/or are united by material possessions (Greeff, 2013).

Family well-being is defined as a multi-faceted construct that not simply consists of the combination of various individuals’ well-being, but also of positive environmental conditions and well-functioning family structure as a whole (Newland, 2015). Family well-being is based on interrelated factors, such as physical and mental health of family members, family self-sufficiency and resilience (Newland, 2015). Other factors that can contribute to family well-being include the provision of basic needs, protection of family members, reliability of income, employment, as well as emotional and social health (Newland, 2015). When parents/providers experience satisfaction in

their different life domains, including work, marriage, family and leisure, it can have a positive impact on the rest of the family members' well-being and contribute to optimal family functioning (Newland, 2015; Zimmerman, 2013). Family functioning can be referred to as a multidimensional construct that reflects the effectiveness of family activities and family interactions and enables families to meet their goals, support each other and contribute to each other's well-being (Walsh, 2003).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

During the last two decades South Africa has been experiencing various social, political, and economic changes. These changes lead to more challenging and stressful work and social environments. Changing environments and modern life endangers the beauty of family life (Sekwena, Mostert, & Wentzel, 2007). Families in South Africa are affected and challenged by health issues such as the HIV/AIDS epidemic, poverty, increasing crime rates, a lack of safety, and single headed households (Koen et al., 2012; Sekwena et al., 2007). Due to economic stress and difficulties, the number of dual earning families (where either both parents or both men and women work) are increasing in order to provide financially for their families (Smit, 2001). Long working hours are encouraged by the on-going development of technology whereby individuals are able to take work home on their electronic devices and correspond with work colleagues regarding work from home via internet, electronic mail and mobile phones (Purcell & Raine, 2014; Sullivan, 2015). People also have to travel long distances to get to work, often with the result of spending less time at home and neglecting family relationships (Sekwena et al., 2007). These challenges are causing an imbalance between work and family life and the boundaries between these domains to become unclear. Balancing work and family life is therefore becoming a constant challenge for many people across different sectors (Lenaghan, Buda, & Eisner, 2007). Work-family balance is vital in

improving individual and family well-being (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007) and is needed to minimise the potential conflicts that arise as a result of inter-role conflict caused by work and family life. Supported by the discussion above, finding and maintaining a balance between work and family life can ultimately lead to a well-functioning society.

Considering the increasing responsibilities of both men and women at home and at work as well as the increasing need to find a balance between these two domains, family well-being and social workers' responsibilities and/or knowledge in this regard, there is a clear need to research social workers' general perceptions of work-family balance and family well-being. The aim of this study is therefore to explore and describe social workers' perceptions of work-family balance and family well-being in a group of South African social workers. The study's significance lies in the fact that social workers' knowledge with regard to work-family balance and family well-being in their professional capacity can contribute to our understanding and knowledge of work-family balance and can contribute, on a small scale, to family well-being in the South African context. Findings can also contribute to the expansion of theoretical knowledge of work-family balance within a South African context. Effective strategies to introduce work-family balance that could potentially contribute to family well-being are also identified. The study also has the potential to provide knowledge in a multi-disciplinary context.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, in this section, a literature review was presented in order to establish the background and basis of this study. Considering that the research is presented in an article format, the following section presents the journal guidelines of the intended journal for submission as well as the manuscript to be submitted to the intended journal.

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SECTION 2

INTENDED JOURNAL, JOURNAL'S GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS & MANUSCRIPT

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References

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MANUSCRIPT:

**AN EXPLORATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS' PERCEPTIONS OF FAMILY
WELL-BEING AND THE BALANCE BETWEEN WORK AND FAMILY
DOMAINS**

For publication in the

Journal of Community, Work and Family

MANUSCRIPT

The manuscript structure is as follows: Title page; abstract, including key words; introduction/problem statement and aim; method (research design; sampling and participants; data collection; data analysis; ethical considerations); results and discussion; conclusion; and references.

TITLE PAGE

RESEARCH ARTICLE

An exploration of social workers' perceptions of family well-being and the balance between work and family domains

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Author contribution: The manuscript was written for and formed part of a dissertation that the student (first author) submitted in partial fulfilment of degree requirements. The second and third author acted as supervisor and co-supervisor and were continually involved in the process of the study. As the study fell under a larger research programme, the first author contributed to theme development under the larger programme.

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Abstract

Finding and maintaining work-family balance has become an increasingly difficult challenge for South African families due to various economic, political, social, and cultural changes that lead to challenging, high demand, and stressful work and social (family) environments. Social workers have responsibilities and/or knowledge in this regard and are trained to promote social change, to help with problem solving in human relationships, and empowerment and liberation of people in order to enhance well-being. Yet, there is little available research on the topic from social workers' perspective. Taking this into consideration, the aim of this study was to explore and describe social workers' perceptions of work-family balance and family well-being in a group of South African social workers. A qualitative, narrative inquiry research design was implemented. The sample includes 13 female social workers (n=13) between the ages of 23 and 46 who work in different social work contexts across South Africa. They were recruited by means of purposive and snowball/network sampling. Data were collected by means of written narratives and analysed with the use of thematic analysis. The results describe social workers' perceptions of work-family balance, social workers' perceptions of how work-family balance can potentially contribute to family well-being, and strategies that social workers regard as effective to introduce to work-family balance that can potentially contribute to family well-being.

Key words: family; well-being; work-family balance; social work; social worker/s

Introduction and problem statement

Humans are social beings by nature and relationships therefore play an important role in our lives, often acting as the source of our greatest source of joy or pain (Lambert et al., 2013; Demir & Özdemir, 2010). One of the most prominent relationships in a person's life is their family relationship/s (Delle Fave, Brdar, Freire, Vella-Brodrick, & Wissing, 2011). Family is seen as the most important institution for developing and influencing human life (Frankel, 1976) and is perceived to be the backbone of human existence (Md-Sidin, Sambasivan, & Ismail, 2008). The term "family" is conceptualised and referred to as a multi-dimensional institution that takes on various forms (Zimmerman, 2013), mostly involving two or more people who are either blood related, emotionally connected, caring for extended family and/or united by material possessions (Greeff, 2013).

Families and family functioning play an important role in the way communities are structured and can be a determining factor in how well communities function (Belsey, 2005; Koen, Van Eeden, & Rothmann, 2013). Well-functioning families have the potential to enhance the socio-economic well-being of individuals and the well-being of the broader community (Department of Social Development, 2013). Family is also perceived as one of the most important social entities in allowing people to group themselves in order to find collective support and security (DeFrain & Asay, 2007) as well as fulfil people's emotional, social, physical and financial needs (Newland, 2015; Zimmerman, 2013). Family therefore plays a significant role in people's lives as it gives meaning to life (Du Toit, Wissing, & Khumalo, 2014). Taking this into consideration, the importance of family well-being and the need to research family well-being becomes clear.

Family well-being is defined as a multi-dimensional construct and paradigm that consists of positive and uplifting environmental conditions, health, a healthy economic state, safety,

spirituality/religion and a well-functioning family structure as a whole. (Newland, 2015; Noor, Gandi, Ishak, & Wok, 2012). Family well-being is not simply based on individual well-being, but also involves interrelated factors, such as physical and mental health of family members, family self-sufficiency, family cohesion, family conflict and harmony, expression of emotions, and resilience (Armstrong, Birnie-Lefcovitch, & Ungar, 2005; Chien & Mistry, 2013; Newland, 2015).

Various theoretical models have been developed to understand and measure family well-being. The *ecological system theory* (Wollny, Apps, & Henricson, 2010) argues that family well-being is influenced by environmental factors such as the dynamics of family relationships (Schimmack & Lucas, 2007), time spent at work (Bakker & Demerouti, 2012), and a country's social and economic state (Md-Sidin et al., 2008). The *resource theory* (Wollny et al., 2010) conceptualises the 'interpersonal resource exchange' to promote well-being within the family. The exchange of resources, including time, money, information, possessions and love are necessary to ensure that the needs of individuals are met and their life satisfaction improved (Wollny et al., 2010). The *family system-based theory* (Wollny et al., 2010) explains the importance of interpersonal relationships and interactions within the family context. In this theory, family functioning refers to a multi-dimensional construct that reflects the effectiveness that activities and internal factors, such as communication styles, conflict resolving styles and psycho-social support within the family, contribute to family well-being (Wollny et al., 2010; Walsh, 2003).

In spite of the growing body of literature pointing to the importance of family, evidence suggests that the family institution is in increasing danger and risks demise (Walsh, 1996). Modern day South African families face a great deal of challenges including various social, political, and economic changes. This threatens family well-being (Noor et al., 2012; Sekwena, Mostert, & Wentzel, 2007) and leads to more challenging and stressful work and social environments

(Amoateng & Richter, 2007). Families in South Africa are also affected by and face challenges such as poverty, single parent households, increasing crime rates, a lack of security and a number of health issues such as the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Koen et al., 2012; Sekwena et al., 2007). Another challenge faced by families that has gained increasing prominence over the last few years, is the challenge of finding and maintaining work-family balance (Halpern, 2005). According to the South African Board for People Practices Women's Report for 2011 (SABPP, 2011), more women in South Africa are entering the workforce in order to aid, amongst others, gender transformation and empowerment of women. This is due to socio-economic challenges that result in both men and women being increasingly faced with greater responsibilities and various roles to be fulfilled at work and at home (Clark, 2000). This supports the view that work and family-life cannot be separated, and that there is a need to find balance between these two life domains (Clark, 2000).

Work-family balance is defined as the degree to which a person perceives an experience of positive relationships in both work and family roles. Work-family balance is further defined as a state where family members' relationships are in balance or compatible with each other (Michigan State University, 2015). It is recommended that people have a balanced approach towards their roles in the work and family domain and should aim to be equally committed to both roles (Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw, 2003; Mead 1964). To seek for meaning and pleasant experiences in both work and family life is a starting point when motivated to balance various roles and responsibilities within these life domains. A positively balanced involvement in work and family role responsibilities may reduce negative experiences in the work and family domain and therefore enhance overall well-being (Greenhaus et al., 2003).

Five main models are used to explain the relationship between work and family life (Guest, 2001; Naithani, 2010; O'Driscoll, 1996): *the segmentation-, spillover-, compensation-, instrumental-*

and conflict model. The segmentation model views work and life (non-work) as two separate and distinct life domains that do not influence each other (Bludson, Blyton, Reed, & Dastmalchian, 2006). *The spillover model*, perceives the two domains as having the ability to influence each other in a positive or negative manner (Naithani, 2010; Pleck, 1977). *The compensation model* hypothesises that a lack of demand and/or satisfaction in one domain can be compensated for in the other domain (Staines, 1980). According to *the instrumental model* the activities in one domain are seen to facilitate success in the other domain (O'Driscoll, 1996). Lastly, *the conflict model* theorizes that as a result of high levels of demand in all spheres of life, conflicts may arise which can significantly challenge a person (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Guest 2001). These theories highlight the fact that work and family life are interrelated and therefore a need for a balanced life is vital (Clark, 2000).

According to the *work-family border theory* (Clark, 2000), people are constantly negotiating their work and family domains and the borders between these domains in order to achieve balance. This theory explains that the meaning of work and family life differs in terms of purpose and culture due to socio-economic changes and challenges. Transgression is therefore required to promote and maintain a balance between work and family life. Though work and family life may differ from one individual to another, work and family life may, to some degree, be modified to border and create a desired balance (Clark, 2000).

As a result of the tough economic times, dual-earning families, where both parents and/or both men and women work, are on the increase in order to meet their families' financial needs (Smit, 2001). According to Purcell and Raine (2014) and Sullivan (2015), the on-going development of technology has contributed to longer working hours since people are able to take work home on their electronic devices as well as correspond with work colleagues regarding work via internet, electronic

mail and mobile phones from home. Considering the limited availability of work opportunities, people increasingly have to travel long distances to work, and as a result, spend less time at home. This can lead to neglect of family relationships and responsibilities (Sekwena et al., 2007). These challenges are causing an imbalance between work and family life and boundaries thereof to become unclear. Balancing work and family life is therefore becoming a constant challenge for many people in different sectors (Lenaghan, Buda, & Eisner, 2007). In order to promote a well-functioning society it is important to find and maintain a balance between work and family-life. Furthermore work-family balance is vital for improving individual and family well-being (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007) and is required in order to minimize the potential conflict that can arise from inter-role conflict caused by work and family life.

Considering the above, the need for a balanced work-family life and its potential to promote family well-being is highlighted. The reality however, is that South African families are affected by socio-economic, environmental, technological and political challenges (Md-Sidin et al., 2008). The role responsibilities of men and women also contribute to the dynamic of family structure, affecting the capacity of families to function optimally (White Paper for Social Welfare, 1997). Social services rendered by social workers are therefore necessary to promote effective functioning in order to ensure family well-being and balance within the family (White Paper for Social Welfare, 1997).

Social workers are trained to assist in promoting social change, to assist with problem solving in human relationships and to promote the empowerment and liberation of people in order to enhance well-being (White Paper for Social Welfare, 1997). Social workers are trained to work directly with individuals, families and communities in order to advocate social change, by keeping clients' (individuals', families' and communities') best interests at heart; caring for and assisting them in a professional manner and promoting their well-being (Rogowski, 2011). Social workers are

also equipped to address multiple and complex relations between individuals and their environments to promote well-being as well as identify and develop potential strengths (South African Council for Social Service Professions, 2015). They are therefore capable of promoting families' work-family balance and family well-being. Social workers' perceptions regarding work-family balance and family well-being in general are therefore explored for the purpose of this study.

In light of the above, the following research question is identified: What are social workers' perceptions of work-family balance and family well-being?

Aim

In order to answer the research question, the aim of this study is to explore and describe social workers' perceptions of work-family balance and family well-being in a group of South African social workers.

Method

The research method includes the research design, sampling and participants, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

Research design

A qualitative research approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) was implemented in the origin of this study, as social workers' perceptions of work-family balance and family well-being (in general) were explored and the findings interpreted to make sense of work-family balance, and how it contributes to family well-being (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Qualitative research is based on the assumption that reality is co-constructed by people (Creswell, 2014). This research study specifically

draws on knowledgeable people's construction of reality. The study therefore subscribes to the ontological assumption that there are many truths and realities with regard to how society is constructed (Nieuwenhuis, 2007), thereby informing the epistemological assumption that knowledge is socially constructed and that the participants are the experts on their perceptions of work-family balance and family well-being. For the purpose of this study, narrative inquiry was used as research design (Botma, Greeff, Mulaudzi, & Wright, 2010). The chosen research design is fitting as it focuses on stories, perceptions and opinions as the object of inquiry in order to determine how people make sense of society and the world around them (Botma et al., 2010).

Sampling and participants

Participants were recruited by means of purposive sampling from a population of social workers who met the inclusion criteria (Botma et al., 2010). Participants had to be: registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) as practising social workers; literate in English; and willing to participate. Social media (Facebook) was used as a platform to recruit participants. An advertisement was placed on various South African Facebook pages ("Facing Social Work", "SA Social Work Practice", "SACSSP Council" etc.) (Please see Addendum 1 for a copy of the advertisement). Six participants were recruited with the use of purposive sampling. In order to prevent selection bias, participants were thereafter recruited with the use of snowball/network sampling to make contact with the harder-to-reach individuals (Botma et al., 2010) that could not be recruited through social media. Participants who were purposively sampled and recruited via social media were asked to locate individuals or colleagues who met the inclusion criteria and who were willing to participate in the study. The snowball/network sampling continued (based on participant referrals) to the point of data saturation (the point at which no new data or information can be obtained) (Botma et al., 2010). Seven participants were recruited through

snowball/network sampling. The total sample consisted of 13 female social workers (n=13) between the ages of 23 and 46 who work in different social work contexts across South Africa. Table 1 provides the demographic profile of the participants.

Table 1. Demographic profile of participants (n = 13)

Item	Category
Gender	Male
	Female
Home language	Afrikaans
	English
	Setswana
Age	20 – 29
	30 – 39
	40 – 49
Number of years in practice	< 1 year
	1 – 4 years
	5 – 9 years
	> 10 years
Type of practice	NGOs
	Government Departments
	Private practice
	School/University setting

Data collection

Atkinson (1998), states that narratives, as a qualitative data collection technique, are an excellent way of gaining an understanding of people's perceptions and/or experiences, lives and interactions. Botma et al. (2010), state that the unique nature of narratives can reveal exceptionally

rich data. The use of written narratives was appropriate for this study as it provided insight and understanding into the participants' perceptions. Participants were asked to write a short one- to two-page narrative on their perceptions of (i) what work-family balance is, (ii) how work-family balance can potentially contribute to family well-being, and (iii) which strategies (with examples) they regard as effective in introducing work-family balance that could potentially contribute to family well-being. Participants received specific guidelines that instructed them in writing the narratives (please see Addendum 2 for a copy of these guidelines). Participants had the option to either write the narrative by hand, or type the narrative. If written by hand, they could either scan it onto a computer and then send it via electronic mail to the researcher or post it to the researcher. If typed, it could either be e-mailed or printed and posted. Addendum 3 provides examples of collected narratives.

Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis refers to the examination, transformation and interpretation of collected data, through analytic procedures into clear, understandable and trustworthy information (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). The procedure of qualitative data analysis provides a platform to make sense of and better understand underlying meanings, ideas and social patterns in empirical data (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Thematic analysis was used to manually analyse the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and the analyses was done concurrently with the data collection to determine the point at which data saturation was reached. The six steps suggested by Clarke and Braun (2013) and Braun and Clarke (2006) were followed to analyse the collected data. The suggested steps are: (i) Familiarisation with the data, (ii) coding, (iii) searching for themes, (iv) reviewing themes, (v) defining and naming the themes, and (vi) writing up the data.

The researcher and an experienced co-coder manually and independently analysed the data. The co-coder was provided with a work protocol for data analysis by the researcher (please see Addendum 4 for a copy of this protocol). After the researcher and co-coder independently analysed the data, a consensus discussion took place to ensure coding themes and to add to trustworthiness with regard to the data analysis.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the term that is traditionally used in quantitative research to describe the validity and reliability of a study (Miles et al., 2014). According to Botma et al. (2010, p. 230), “trustworthiness is the degree of confidence researchers have in their data”. In a qualitative study, trustworthiness is measured by the following criteria: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The goal of *credibility* is to demonstrate that the study was conducted in such a way as to ensure that the research subject was accurately identified and described (Schurink, Fouché, & De Vos, 2011). *Dependability* refers to whether the process of the research will be consistent over time and across different contexts, researchers and methods. It also refers to whether a study can be reasonably replicated (Schurink et al., 2011). *Confirmability* is an indication of whether the findings of the research study can be confirmed by literature (Schurink et al., 2011). Lastly, *transferability* is an indication that the research findings can be transferred from one situation to another and whether the conclusions of a study have any significant importance (Schurink et al., 2011). Table 2 provides an overview of the measures that were implemented in the study in order to ensure trustworthiness.

Table 2. Measures to ensure trustworthiness

Criteria	Measure
Credibility	• Reflection (the researcher was honest and critical and reflected on herself and the entire process throughout the study) • Peer review (the researcher consulted with her supervisor and co-supervisor) • Structural coherence (integrating data and executing a literature integration/control to account for similar or contradictory findings and research; linking it to other research findings)
Dependability	• Dense description (the participants, method, data collection, data analysis, etc. are described in detail) • Code-recoder procedure (use of experienced, independent co-coder (also see section on analysis for more information)) • Audit trail (keeping logs and other documentation stored securely for referral)
Confirmability	• Audit trail • Reflexivity
Transferability	• Dense description

Ethical considerations

The research study carries institutional ethical approval (NWU-00076-13-A1). The researcher implemented several international ethical principles such as the principles explained in the Helsinki declaration in order to ensure that the study is conducted in an ethical manner (Burns & Grove, 2005). The researcher took the following ethical principles into consideration with regard to the rights of the participants: Sampling was done in a manner that is fair as specific inclusion criteria were met and participants were not exploited or discriminated against (Botma et al., 2010). Participants were recruited purposively through an advertisement on various Facebook pages. Thereafter snowball/network sampling was used to further recruit participants until data saturation was reached in order to prevent selection bias (Strydom, 2011). Participation was voluntarily and anonymous. Participants held the right of privacy, self-determination and confidentiality and no participant was forced, intimidated, bribed, and/or coerced to participate (Strydom, 2011). Participants were informed that their participation can be reversed and that they can withdraw their consent and/or participation without having to provide an explanation. Written informed consent regarding the research study and participants' involvement was obtained by an objective party trained to do so (Creswell, 2014) and participants were given at least a week to study the informed consent form (please see Addendum 5 for a copy of the informed consent form). To ensure confidentiality of participants' identities, the informed consent forms were kept separate from the narratives and numbers were allocated to each narrative (Miles et al., 2014) and were used as such for the data analysis. The appointed co-coder was requested to sign a confidentiality agreement. The hard- and electronic copies of data and other documents are stored and will be destroyed according to institutional specifications.

The study was considered a low risk study and no emotional discomfort, psychological discomfort or dignity harm was reported by the participants (Botma et al., 2010). The possibility for emotional and psychological discomfort or dignity harm could however not be predicted in advance. Taking this into consideration, the contact information of a helping and qualified professional was provided to participants who may have experienced any mental discomfort or distress during or as a result of their participation for telephonic (due to logistics) emotional containment and support. There were no financial costs involved for participants in this study. Participants might benefit indirectly from the study by gaining an understanding of their perceptions of work-family balance and family well-being. Participants may also come to understand and identify ways that can improve or contribute to work-family balance and/or family well-being. The actual benefits for participants of the study therefore outweigh the observed risks. The researcher did not falsify, fabricate, exaggerate, manipulate, or plagiarise the data and is truthful and honest when reporting the findings of the research (Botma et al., 2010).

Results and discussion

The themes that emerged from the data collected are illustrated in Table 3 and discussed in more detail below.

Table 3. Themes and sub-themes that emerged from the narratives

Theme	Sub-themes
Social workers' perceptions of work-family balance	• Finding a healthy balance • The nature of a healthy balance • The result of a healthy balance • Understanding of work-family balance • The ability to separate work and family life responsibilities
Potential outcomes of work-family balance	• Relationships improve • Both family and work receive optimal attention • Family fulfil role as support system • Negative impact on family balance when family balance is not maintained • Family as a sense of fulfilment • Cohesion as a family • Better able to identify and give attention to family challenges • Family as a sense of security
Strategies regarded by social workers as effective to introduce to work-family balance that can potentially contribute to family well-being	• Set healthy boundaries • Open communication in work and family domains • Strengthen personal and professional support system • Planning, time management, prioritising • Self-care • Reasonable work environment • Continuous personal and family assessment

Theme 1: Social workers' perceptions of work-family balance

Sub-theme 1: Finding a healthy balance. Participants reported that it is vital to find and maintain a balance between the work and family domains. One participant specified: *"This would mean there should be reasonable time to spend with family and friends while you also maintain a high level of dedication to your job."* Participants further indicated that: *"Work-family balance...is the portion of resources divided between the two institutions. I refer to resources such as time, emotional capacity, and dedication;" "...work-family balance really is not to neglect the one for the other one;" "Work must not be more than family and vice versa" and "Finding a healthy balance in different aspects of life is part of a healthy lifestyle and wellbeing."* The literature states that it is recommended to have a balanced approach towards roles in the work and family domain. It is also suggested that one should aim to be equally committed to both roles, but that it is not always possible (Greenhaus et al., 2003; Mead 1964). According to Edwards and Rothbard (2000) people have limited and fixed resources such as time and energy and that it is necessary to balance and maintain these resources in order to prevent challenges and conflict from arising as a result of the demands and responsibilities of work and family domains.

Sub-theme 2: The nature of a healthy balance. A number of participants said that work and family responsibilities have a significant influence on each other and that there should be equality between the time and energy spent in these two life domains. According to Greenhaus et al. (2003) healthy balance is obtained when individuals are equally involved and/or equally content with their role responsibilities at work and at home. One participant said: *"Sometimes your work does require that you have time away from the family but it should not be a dominant thing happening."* Another participant said: *"Both work and family provides challenges and is emotionally charged."* Participants also pointed out that; *"The work-family balance phenomenon is quite individually*

defined in the sense that one should have to take a look at their own unique life to determine what balance should exist;" "...work family is subjective, the term balance differs between individuals;" "...it feels like a juggling act" and "...if there is not balance between both dimensions one will suffer neglect." The literature indicates that balancing work and family life is one of the greatest challenges faced in this era (Halpern, 2005). According to Clark (2000) work-family balance is viewed differently by different people and the attainment and fulfilment of balance between work and family life may vary from one person to another. This is because not all people allocate equal time and energy to the respective domains or integrate and separate their emotions and responsibilities in the same way at work and at home. Thus, the nature of a healthy balance is described as a subjective experience (Greenhaus et al., 2003; Clark, 2000).

Sub-theme 3: The result of a healthy balance. Participants indicated that more people should strive to find and maintain balance between work and family life as it can have a positive impact. According to the literature, the involvement in and experience of various roles in the two life domains (work and family) can improve meaning of life as well as satisfaction in and quality of life (Bakker & Demerouti, 2012). When work and family roles are of high quality and are experienced in a positive manner it can have beneficial effects on psychological and physical well-being (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Participants said: *"You must have enough energy and motivation to go to work daily but also want to spend quality time with family afterwards;" "...to be at peace with both work and family life,"* and *"...when you enjoy both aspects at different times without feeling guilty about neglecting the other one."* Another participant said: *"This balance would have to please you for it to be effective."* One participant indicated that, if one domain is higher prioritised than the other or if there is no kind of balance between work and family, conflict may arise between work and family life. This would result in neglect of responsibilities. The literature indicates that work-family balance is obtained when satisfaction and effectiveness in both work and family roles are

obtained (Greenhaus & Allen, 2006). In contrast, work-family conflict can develop if the two life domains are not balanced, which can then lead to emotional exhaustion (Akintayo, 2010).

Sub-theme 4: Understanding work-family balance. Participants' perceptions of work-family balance included their understanding of what work-family balance is. One participant said: "*Work-family balance is the degree to which one's family and work life interchange and whether there is a difference or equality between time and input between the two.*" Others said: "*Work-family balance is about the way an individual balances work/occupation as well as family life*" and "*...to be at peace with both your work and personal life.*" Another participant said that: "*Work family-balance is finding a healthy balance between the responsibilities of work and the responsibilities of family life.*" The literature describes work-family balance as the degree to which a person experiences positive relationships in both work and family roles (Michigan State University, 2015) and "satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with minimum role conflict" (Clark, 2002, p.751).

Sub-theme 5: The ability to separate work and family responsibilities. Although some participants have described this as a sub-theme under the first theme, it is a theme that occurs throughout the results. Participants indicated that it is important not to take work home as far as possible, in order to ensure that you will have enough quality time to spend with family after a long day of work. It is also mentioned to not involve family issues with one's work responsibilities, unless it is a crisis. Participants said: "*...you should be able to separate the professional and personal identities and the roles, responsibilities...*" and "*a good separation of the family and working environment is key towards ensuring a work-family balance through the abilities of separating the professional and personal roles and also by not taking work home, it confirms that your time with the family and work is separate. Taking work home steals 'family time', which may*

strain the family dynamic or relationships.” According to the spillover model (Staines, 1980); demands and responsibilities of life domains are transferred from one life domain to another despite the existing boundaries between work and family life. For example, the role pressure and expectations of work has an effect on the optimal functioning at home and the role pressure and demands at home influence ideal functioning at work, therefore conflict between the two life domains arise (Bakker & Demerouti, 2012). The spillover model further explains that involvement in various roles also provides several opportunities and resources one can utilise to foster personal growth and optimal functioning in different life domains (Marks, 1977). This is known as positive spillover. Participants said: “...*keeping strict boundaries between work and home life;*” and “*the boundary between the two must be permeable and flexible because in today’s world it’s difficult to keep rigid boundaries.*” Studies of the available literature showed that work and family life are interconnected and therefore it cannot be separated. Both men and women have different role responsibilities to fulfil and the urge to find and maintain work-family balance is vital (Clark, 2000). The work-family border theory (Clark, 2000) made it possible and easier for people to negotiate their work and family domains and the borders between them in order to achieve a desired balance. The border theory admits that meaning of work and family and role responsibilities varies from one person to another and depends on the cultural and socio-economic statuses and that transgression is required to find work-family balance (Clark, 2000).

Theme 2: Potential outcomes of work-family balance

Sub-theme 1: Relationships improve. Participants indicated that it is important for family members to have effective communication, healthy relationships and positive social interactions to enhance family well-being. Some of the participants said: “...*you have better relations if people are*

able to share in all the aspects of life;" *"It includes spending more quality time with your family..."* and *"...this can often involve a shared interest or hobby that the family does together."* The literature supports the necessity of building and maintaining positive family relationships and to pursue effective communication as it contributes to family well-being (Koen et al., 2012). The time family members invest in each other by partaking in family activities and spending quality time together further enhances families' psycho-social well-being (Koen et al., 2012). Taking part in meaningful activities, offering social support, fostering positive family relationships and encouraging communication are different ways of promoting the well-being of families (Park, 2004). Effective "communication builds interactive understanding and thereby builds strong healthy family relationships" (Koen et al., 2012, p. 347). It is also found that honest and regular communication promotes social skills and emotional competence (Leme, Del Prette, & Coimbra, 2015; Louw & Louw, 2007).

Sub-theme 2: Both family and work receive optimal attention. Participants mentioned that it is necessary that both life domains receive optimal attention and that it is important to maintain a balance between work and family responsibilities so that *"...each area receives the best possible attention you can give"* as one of the participants indicated. The participants said: *"When a person is able to maintain a good work-family balance, you can give more attention at home...;"* *"If a person does not find a balance, it will influence the family and the possibility for the family to deteriorate becomes great... or one's work can also be influenced by not giving enough attention to it and so the productivity and quality of work will decline...;"* *"...stressful workload impacts spending time with your family...;"* *"...when one is stressed at work he/she can take out the frustration on the family by either withdrawing or shouting at family members..."* and *"...if you are at peace at work, not anxious when socialising, you will be able to live in and appreciate the moment..."* Literature finds that maintaining work-family balance is necessary and that one should

be equally committed to both life domains regarding time and involvement (Greenhaus et al., 2003). This is not always true for all individuals as work-family balance depends on individual desires, needs and/or values. For example, literature states that women in the workforce emphasize the importance of family in the balance between work and family life (Bielby & Bielby, 1989). As a result of this Mark and MacDermid (1996) suggested that individuals should strive to maintain a positive work-family balance where people are not only equally committed but are equally satisfied with the different roles they are involved in. Positive work-family balance is found to promote family well-being and is able to reduce the conflict and stress that can occur and spill over from one life domain to another (Greenhaus et al., 2003).

Sub-theme 3: Family fulfils role as support system. Participants indicated that the family fulfils an important role as a support system to provide in members' emotional needs. The family is also referred to as a place where one can feel safe enough to debrief from work issues, while still maintaining balance. Some of the participants said: *"When there is adequate support, it's easier to find a balance between work and family;" "...family gatherings...will contribute to social skills and a sense of belonging;"* and *"you will also be more open to talk about your work to your family..."* The literature states that social support is an extremely important external mechanism to protect family members against potential stressors so that individuals can cope with challenges from inside and outside the family setting as it may greatly affect family well-being (Leme et al., 2015). Social support provides tangible assistance and is associated with positive emotional development, effective communication and problem solving techniques (Leme et al., 2015; Koen et al., 2012). Research also found that social support helps to develop a positive mind-set and acts as a resource that promotes resilience in stressful times at work (Huffman, Culbertson, Wayment, & Irving, 2015). A close knit family and positive social support can reduce the negative effect stress has on well-being (Fuller-Iglesias, Webster, & Antonucci, 2015). It is also found that children benefit from parents'

work-family balance as it has a positive effect on their development, particularly when they receive emotional- and social support within the family setting (Haddock & Rattenborg, 2003).

Sub-theme 4: Negative impact on family when work-family balance is not maintained. Participants emphasised the importance of maintaining a healthy work-family balance. Participants point out some of the consequences if work-family balance is not maintained: “...*the family will suffer...*,” “*straining your relationships;*” “*the family can feel abandoned;*” “...*it influences your quality and quantity work;*” and “...*burnout will also occur.*” Another participant said: “*Not balancing could have a negative impact socially on your children and could lead to behavioural problems... It could have a negative impact on a marriage as well and communication in the family.*” The literature states that an imbalance between work and family life produces high levels of stress and discomfort, causing distraction from a quality life and impedes the productivity and effectiveness of work (Kofodimos, 1993). The inability to find a desirable balance between the demands of work and family life can cause stress to escalate. As a result, work and family responsibilities will be neglected, with the consequence that family interactions deteriorate and quality of work reduces (Ajala, 2013). The moment when role responsibilities of the work and family domain are in contrast with each other, it can cause role conflict which further leads to emotional exhaustion, leaving little energy to spend time with one’s family (Akintayo, 2010). Research also found that role conflict is associated with lower psycho-social well-being as well as little life –and marital satisfaction (Fischer, Zvonkovic, Juergens, Engler, & Frederick, 2015).

Sub-theme 5: Family as a sense of fulfilment. Participants point out that a sense of reciprocal enrichment and fulfilment can be experienced within the family context if desirable work-family balance is achieved. Both life domains can be enjoyed in its own time, one can enjoy a quality life, and be able to be more productive in the roles one need to fulfil. Some of the participants said: “*If*

you are capable of separating your two worlds and identities, you will be able to flourish optimally...;” “*...balance is essential to the individual’s sense of belonging, self-esteem and overall life satisfaction... and the positive influence it can have on an individual, ultimately contributes to a family’s well-being*” and “*...allows for individuality and promotes a sense of fulfilment...*” The literature supports this view as it states that satisfaction experienced in one role can improve a sense of fulfilment and quality of life in another role (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). The resources gained (positive experiences and opportunities to develop skills) from the work environment can spill over to the family domain to help enrich the quality of family life (Wayne, Grzywacz, Carlson, & Kacmar, 2007; Greenhaus et al., 2003). Research provides evidence to suggest that a positive work-family balance can promote a quality life and is one of the most prominent indicators of well-being and satisfaction with life (Greenhaus et al., 2003). The literature also indicates that being part of “positive institutions” (p. 777), such as family and community, improves well-being, a sense of meaning in life and individual fulfilment (Seligman, Rashid, & Parks, 2006). Haddock and Rattenborg’s (2003) research found that when balance between work and family life is achieved, a sense of fulfilment can be experienced, leading to increased well-being and self-esteem. According to Greenhaus, Ziegert, and Allen (2012) supportive family environments help to reduce stress and conflict between the two life domains and enhance balance.

Sub-theme 6: Cohesion as a family. Participants point out that it is necessary to strive to achieve work-family balance and to spend quality time with one’s family as it has the potential to contribute to the cohesion of the family. Participants specified: “*...spending time with your family, enjoying their company and investing yourself therein*” and “*...enjoy time with the people that you love.*” Other participants said: “*...work-family balance can also contribute to the cohesion in a family which ultimately influences the wellbeing of the family*” and “*work-family balance, it will allow your family to function optimally.*” Clark (2000) explains that when work-family balance is

maintained, optimal functioning will occur within the work and family domain with minimum conflict between role responsibilities. Positive work-family balance can increase satisfying experiences, such as the enjoyment of relaxation, spending time with family, building relationships and delivering productive and quality work (Greenhaus et al., 2003). Research also indicates that the quality time one spends with family is positively associated with perceived work-family balance, family- and overall life satisfaction (Allen & Kibuz, 2012).

Sub-theme 7: Better able to identify and give attention to family challenges. Participants mentioned that when work-family balance is achieved and maintained, families' needs can be met and family members and in particular, family challenges, receive the necessary attention. One participant said: "...more likely to notice inappropriate behaviour by family members..." Another participant pointed out that one will know how to: "...identify and deal with family challenges." When perceived work-family balance is maintained, family members' needs can be met as they receive the necessary attention (Haddock & Rattenborg, 2003).

Sub-theme 8: Family as a sense of security. Participants indicated that family adds to a sense of security for family members and should be a key priority. One participant said: "...support at work and at home is extremely important." ...never underestimate the importance of family." Another said: "...work-family balance will ensure that children are raised feeling that parents are present, this in my opinion, forms the foundation for secure attachment." The family acts as a support system and is a place of safety, where healthy and reasonable rules and boundaries are in place, and where one should feel loved and cared for (Lambert et al., 2013). The literature indicates that support received at work and at home is important for the enhancement of overall life satisfaction and well-being (Kossek, Pichler, Bodner, & Hammer, 2011). Support at work allows a person to have access to resources such as helping relationships, information and assistance. The support received from work enables a person to feel appreciated, to debrief from stressful situations

and prevents the demands and stress from work to flow over to the family (Kessek et al., 2011). This allows a person to fully enjoy and value quality time spent at home. A healthy work-family balance allows a person to provide in childrens' social-, emotional-, and physical needs (Greenahaus & Powell, 2006). This supports the view of family as a source of security. According to Haddock and Rattenborg (2003) the family also provides financial security and parents can thus afford high quality care for their children and save for their children's education.

Theme 3: Strategies regarded as effective to introduce work-family balance that could potentially contribute to family well-being

Sub-theme 1: Set healthy boundaries. Participants highlighted the importance of healthy boundaries. Participants mentioned that it is necessary to distinguish between work and family responsibilities. There are times one would need to only focus on work, but it is also important to set time apart to spend with the family. Some of the participants said: *"Make your own rules/boundaries and stick to them so you make time for everything;" "act professionally in the workplace, but remember your individual roles at home...;" "leave your work at work; "...you need to distinguish between your roles... this includes not taking work home...;" "...if you are thinking of work at home you cannot focus completely on the expectations of the family;"* and *"assertiveness is often important..."* According to the segmentation model, work and family roles are distinct from one another (Rothbard, Phillips, & Dumas, 2005). Taking participants' beliefs and statements into consideration, a desire to separate the two life domains arises. Keeping work and family roles separate allows individuals to be fully devoted to and develop the role and responsibilities of one life domain at a time (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Lambert 1990). The separation of roles further allows individuals to successfully cope with demands and responsibilities and helps protect individuals

from being exposed to high levels of stress, emotional strains and extreme psychological mood swings (Rothbard et al., 2005). Separating work from family life and setting clear boundaries becomes a deliberate decision one needs to continually make to allow you to spend quality time with the family and ensure that family well-being is enhanced (Rothbard et al., 2005).

Sub-theme 2: Open communication in work and family domains. Participants highlighted the significance of effective and open communication in both domains as a strategy to enhance work-family balance. Some participants mentioned that it is necessary to inform family members when there is a crisis at work in order to receive support and form mutual understanding in stressful times. Participants also mentioned there should be open communication in the workplace between the employer and employees. Some participants said: *“Talk to other staff/supervisors so that you don’t have to carry all the burdens...;”* *...if there’s communication then others will understand your situation better;”* *“...talk about the work to debrief...”* and *“...open communication is important so that both areas of your life know what is going on in the other area.”* Another participant said: *“Have family meetings - discuss what everyone is doing during the week, how they are doing, do they need to know anything, etc.”* According to Soni (2013) work-family balance cannot be maintained without effective communication. The literature further supports this view, as open communication has the potential for individuals to create a better understanding of one another, it creates an opportunity for people to respect each other, to have empathy and support one another (Theunissen, Van Vuuren, & Visser, 2003). With regular communication amongst family members, members are kept informed about each other’s work and personal life; individuals can have a better understanding of the different role responsibilities within the work and family environment, eliminating future misunderstandings and conflict (Koen et al., 2012; Theunissen et al., 2003). According to Koen et al. (2012) effective communication promotes and fosters social competence which helps to build support networks. Research also found that communication between the

employee and employer can prevent numerous frustrations, repetition of and exhaustion of work (Soni, 2013).

Sub-theme 3: Strengthen personal and professional support system. Participants identified strengthening personal and professional support systems as a possible strategy. Participants distinguished between two support groups: The personal support system, including family and friends, and the professional support system, referring to colleagues and other professionals in the work environment. Participants said that: “...support at work and home is extremely important...;” “...if you are supported at work, there is an openness to discuss possible issues...it makes it easier to focus on work when you receive support from colleagues...” and “...a professional support network should only exclusively be used for professional issues... personal support network is not there for you to moan, but rather to strengthen and positively influence the family...” Some of the other participants mentioned that the family as a support system acts a “sound board” allowing you to debrief. The literature supports this view and indicates that a sound support system acts as a useful resource to help achieve work-family balance (Ferguson, Carlson, Kacmar, & Halbesleben, 2015; Greenhaus et al., 2012). The social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) explains the importance of social support. This theory indicates that sufficient social and emotional support, leads individuals to believe that they are part of a family and/or a network and those they are valued and cared for. The support received from a personal support system can positively influence the work domain. It also assists in the relief of work related conflict; exhaustion, and burnout, resulting in increased satisfaction in the workplace (Ferguson et al., 2015; Huffman et al., 2015; Leme et al., 2015). The literature further explains that effective support systems create opportunities for people to empathise with each other and have a better understanding of one another (Nappo-Dattoma, 2015; Koen et al., 2012). According to Wayne et al. (2007) people are designed to form part of supportive and interactive relationships. Wayne et al. (2007), also states that people are more likely to be productive

and to engage themselves in quality work if work responsibilities consist of meaningful interactions. A professional support system, including co-workers and supervisors, can be seen as a resource to help improve work satisfaction and well-being and can assist in identifying and relieving stress and depression (Wayne et al., 2007; Soni, 2013).

Sub-theme 4: Planning, time management, prioritising. Participants highlighted the importance of developing and improving the ability to plan and prioritise. One participant said: *“Prioritising...is a deliberate thought process to determine what is important and what is not. Certain tasks might need to wait or be delegated so that priorities can be accomplished.”* Another participant indicated the necessity of thorough planning and mentioned that responsibilities would then not be left until the last minute, thereby resulting in the experience of less stress and pressure. Some of the other participants stated: *“...plan your days in order to utilise your time with both institutions...;”* *“determine how much time you want to dedicate to your job and to your family;”* *“...time management... identify time wasters;”* and *prioritise - do not do unnecessary things that would not constructively contribute to your work...* The literature indicates that proper prioritising makes it easier to find balance between the demands of work and family life (Theunissen et al., 2003). In order to maintain a balanced life, it is necessary to be proactive in planning and prioritising. Nappo-Dattoma (2015) recommends some key advice on how to plan and prioritise: (i) One should take time to schedule appointments with family and friends for them to feel valued and for important relationships to flourish. (ii) Learn to eliminate wasting unnecessary time at work, for example on social media, and rather spend time on more important tasks. (iii) Learn to rather delegate work and activities that are difficult to manage instead of wasting time trying to figure out ways to do it alone, (iv) ensuring that time-consuming activities and misunderstandings are limited through clear and honest communication.

Sub-theme 5: Self-care. Some of the participations suggested that self-care is necessary to promote work-family balance. One participant said: *“Self-care is extremely important in my view to work-family balance as, without first recognising that you are the tool to achieving both of these, it can’t be done.”* Some of the other participants stated: *“self-care also involves asking for help;”* that it is necessary to sometimes *“...pray, breathe and re-think...;”* *“dedicate... some alone time for yourself;”* *“...take the afternoon off..;”* and *“... take time to read and do the garden...”* One participant particularly mentioned that we often forget to take care of ourselves and that it is important to reconnect with oneself: *“This can be done by reviewing happy periods, previous strategies for managing stress, hobbies that were enjoyable, etc.”* This same participant indicated that: *“The crux... for all these activities is the concept of mindfulness which encourages being present at each moment and actively engaging in it...”* The literature recommends that individuals should pursue positive fulfilment within the work and family domain (Radley & Figley, 2007). This can be done by placing more focus on positive aspects of life, such as being resilient, being successful, flourishing, thriving and practicing self-care (Seligman, 2003). Radley and Figley (2007) state that, although self-care in the lives of working individuals can sometimes be less of a priority, it is found that self-care does increase individuals’ positive affect towards life and individuals’ well-being. Self-care can take on various forms, for example; maintaining a healthy lifestyle by eating right, exercising and getting enough sleep, taking personal time off from work, spending quality time with family and friends, setting time apart for self-reflection and practicing hobbies (Allen & Kibuz, 2012; Nappo-Dattoma, 2015; Radley & Figley, 2007). Self-care can also be promoted within the work environment by facilitating regular supervision for staff members, creating opportunities for employees to develop on a professional level, and to encourage a warm and friendly work environment where employees feel supported and acknowledged (Hesse, 2002).

Sub-theme 6: Reasonable work environment. Participants stated that a reasonable work environment can help improve a good work-family balance. One of the participants mentioned that employers have a significant influence on their personnel's way of work and that employers should assist staff members in finding effective work family-balance. Participants suggested that employers should not hand out work on the last minute at the end of the work day, should be considerate towards employees when it comes to family crises, and should assist employees in handling work demands effectively. Some participants said: *"For people that do not know the benefits of work-family balance, (the employer should encourage) a seminar... to just educate them to understand why it is important;"* and *"having a manager who is understanding and allows flexible working environment helps."* Another one said: *"...the work environment should employ wellness programmes in order to educate and invest in happier and healthy workers and address stressors in the family connection that... impacts service delivery."* Research found that most modern-day organisations and employers prefer employees to be fully engaged in their work (Fiksenbaum, 2014). For employees to be engaged in work, the work domain should therefore encourage a positive organisational environment (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003; Luthans, 2002), that emphasises the importance of signature strengths and helps develop optimal functioning amongst employees in order to find a balance between work and family life (Wayne et al., 2007). The literature encourages organisations to implement employee wellness programs to support and assist employees in balancing the demands of work and family life and educate employees about the harmful effects that an unbalanced work-family life can have (Fiksenbaum, 2014) These programs can assist employees in developing signature strengths as well as the development of useful resources in the work environment that can positively spill-over to the family domain (Wayne et al., 2007). Soni (2013) encourages organisations and employers to implement employee assistance programmes (EAP) and that it should be designed in a way that will assist employees in effective financial-, communication-

and time management strategies. These programmes should also provide counselling to allow employees to debrief as this will promote work-family balance. According to Fiksenbaum (2014) EAP's should encourage organisations to accommodate flexible working hours, part-time work or regular leave to implement family-friendly policies that support the fulfilment of family responsibilities.

Sub-theme 7: Continuous personal and family assessment. Participants mentioned that an ongoing personal and professional assessment is needed to ensure a healthy work-family balance. One participant said that you need to make sure of the profession you want to be in, as some professions can be very draining. This participant also mentioned that you need to give attention to what others say about you, for example: “...*you are too busy...*” or ...*you have changed... as they pick up early signs of unbalance/burnout before you do...*” The literature shows that assessment of personal and family life plays a contributing role to family well-being (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). With family assessment individuals acknowledge the impact the environment has on personal and family development (Krauss, 2000). Family assessment helps to identify strategies, helps to set and achieve certain goals and enables positive experiences that can enhance competent behaviour, which empowers family members and the family as an entity (Krauss, 2000).

Conclusion

The findings point to the importance of work-family balance for family well-being as well as the importance and need for a healthy balance between the work- and family domain. The results are also indicative of the important role that the individual family member has in this regard, as the responsibility mainly rests with the individual to implement these strategies. A key finding is that work-family balance and the attainment and maintenance thereof is likely to be different for each

individual, again emphasizing the responsibility and role of the individual in this regard. As the literature integration above indicates, the themes and sub-themes are strongly supported by available literature on the topic. The fact that the participants were qualified health care professionals, might, to an extent, explain why the findings are so strongly supported by existing literature as families and well-being is their career focus. Also interesting to note is that the participants' narratives are indicative that they apply their knowledge with regard to work-family balance in their own lives as well. This is a positive finding as it suggests that they are meeting their responsibilities toward their own families as well as their profession. What is evident from the last theme, which focuses on strategies, is that the strategies are relevant on three levels, namely: the individual-, family- and professional level. This is indicative of the interrelated nature of the individual, family, and work context, the impact that one can have on the other, and further highlights the need for a healthy balance in this regard. The following figure (Figure 2) gives a graphic representation of the strategies on these three levels.

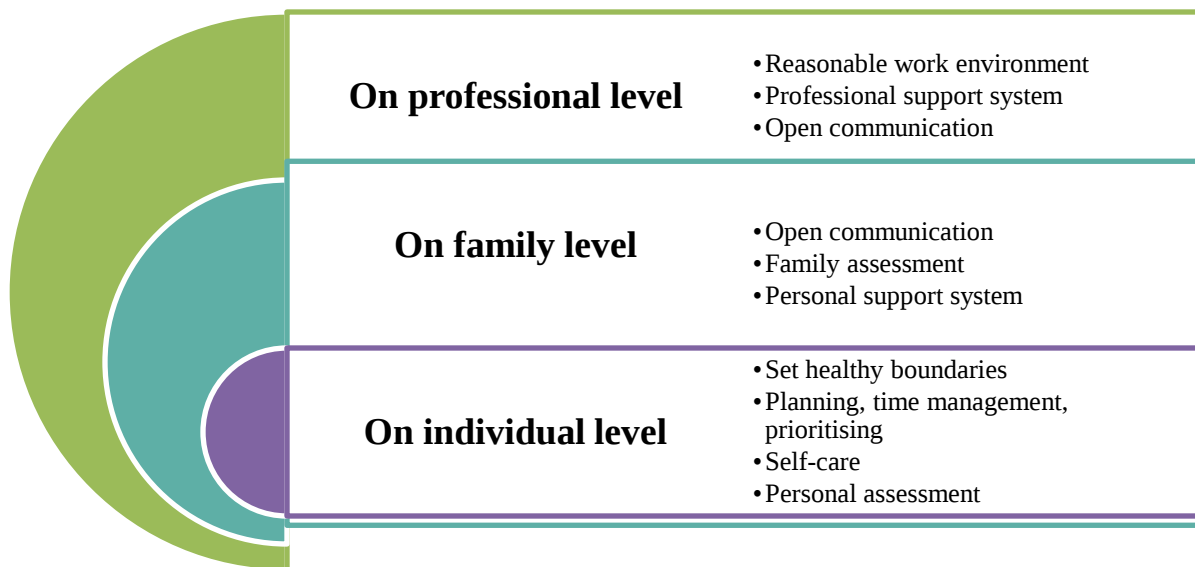


Figure 2. Strategies on individual-, family-, and professional level

Recommendations and Limitations

The study's significance lies in the fact that social workers' knowledge with regard to work-family balance and family well-being, in their professional capacity, contributes to our understanding and knowledge of work-family balance and can contribute to family well-being in a South African context. Furthermore, the findings identify strategies to introduce work-family balance that could potentially contribute to family well-being. It should be noted that the qualitative nature of the study means that the study is contextual in nature and that the study and its findings apply to the specific context that was indicated. The findings can therefore not be generalised to a larger population, but the detailed description of the process that was indicated, will however make the study transferable and make it possible for other researchers to duplicate the study in other contexts if they wish to do so. As all of the participants are females, the study is gender biased. It should also be noted, however, that females make up the largest percentage of South African social workers, making up 86.7% to 89.3% of South African social workers (Department of Labour, 2008) which could have had an impact. Furthermore, time restrictions could also have played a role in the diversity of recruited participants. In spite of this, the participants' input as trained and qualified health care professionals in this study is unique and valuable as both families and well-being receive a great deal of attention in their career. With regard to the method, narratives as data collection technique proved useful as it provided rich and insightful data, however, the use of more and/or different qualitative data collection techniques can be useful for the purpose of triangulation and to provide different perspectives. In certain instances, participants did not, as requested, write their narrative from a general, professional capacity, but rather answered the posed question from a personal point of view. One could speculate that social work practice in South Africa and the resulting job environment, is exceptionally challenging – a statement supported by literature (Alpaslan & Schenck, 2012; Schenck, 2004) and that work-family balance is therefore a daily reality

that South African social workers are personally faced with. Quantitative research that investigates and measures work-family balance in various South African contexts and the relationship thereof to family well-being is also recommended. Further research on all aspects of work-family balance in South Africa is called for and longitudinal studies would also be useful for this purpose.

It is concluded that the study was a successful exploration and description of social workers' perceptions of work-family balance and family well-being in a group of South African social workers. The specific aim that was stated to guide the research was achieved.

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SECTION 3

CONCLUSIONS

In this section a discussion will follow on the literature- and empirical conclusions. This section will also include a personal reflection.

Literature Conclusions

Based on the literature studied for the purpose of this research, it is evident that work-family balance is required to ensure optimal family well-being. Existing literature highlights the demand for balance between work and family life as it explains the positive effect it can have on individuals' personal and professional growth. It is found that the literature provides various interpretations, perspectives and models of work-family balance to empower individuals to find their own unique way of balancing work and family life. Literature specific to a South African context regarding work-family balance was, however, very limited.

According to a diverse range of literature, finding and maintaining work-family balance is an on-going challenge as it is determined and influenced by a person's social-, political- and economic context. It is as a result of this, that researchers increasingly find it necessary to shift the focus from a negative view of work-family conflict to a positive understanding of when/how balance can be achieved between work and family life. Work-family balance is a growing topic in research as more and more studies discover and highlight the positive influences and impact a healthy work-family balance can have on individuals, families and the greater community.

Most of the themes and sub-themes identified in this study are supported by major theories on work-family balance as well as the literature on the topic. This is supported by the literature

integration in the results and discussion section of the manuscript. The information used for the literature control varied from older literature to the most recent sources that support the positive impact work-family balance can have on well-being.

Empirical Conclusions

The research method and design that was implemented in this study proved to be successful as the aim of the study was achieved. With regard to the sampling method used, the use of social media (Facebook) proved to be an effective way to recruit potential participants for a research study as one can reach numerous individuals across South Africa. Ideally, the recruitment should be done over a longer period to ensure effective response from all potential participants. Although there are other professions that may also be able to provide valuable input in this regard, the choice of population (social workers) also proved to be useful as the social worker participants' knowledge in this regard proved to be immensely valuable. The data collection and data analyses techniques proved to be fitting and effective in this instance, as the findings of this research study are rich and meaningful. This is particularly true considering the strategies that social workers regard as effective to introduce to work-family balance, as the results drawn from data in this case can be used to develop and implement wellness programmes within organisations on order to promote work-family balance.

Personal Reflection

The journey of conducting and completing this research study was an unforgettable experience as it created an opportunity for me to discover and learn the valuable contribution that a

healthy balance between work and family life can have towards family well-being. I had the privilege to explore social workers' perceptions of work-family balance through written narratives. The study has indicated that there is a growing need for work-family balance within a South African context. The strategies identified by participants are valuable as it is seen as an effective and strategic way to enhance a positive balance between the two life domains. The results inspired me to implement the strategies in my own life and I hope that future research studies, to further investigate the effectiveness of the strategies and develop wellness programmes to promote work-family balance in various work settings across South Africa, will be inspired by this study so that the beauty of family life can be ultimately be enhanced. To conclude, this was a successful study as the research question has been answered and the aim has been achieved.

ADDENDUMS

ADDENDUM 1: Advertisement

ADVERTISEMENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH



SOCIAL WORKERS' PERCEPTIONS OF WORK-FAMILY BALANCE AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

My name is Marlize Bisschoff and I am enrolled as a Master's student in Positive Psychology at the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus. I intend to carry out a study with the aim to explore social workers' perceptions of work-family balance and family well-being in a group of South African social workers.

I invite you to take part in the study.

You may take part if you are registered as a social worker with the South African Council for Social Service Profession (SACSSP) and are practicing as a social worker.

What will be expected of YOU?

You will be asked to write a short one to two page narrative on your perceptions (as a social worker) of what work-family balance is, how work-family balance can potentially contribute to family well-being and what strategies (with examples) you regard as effective to introduce work-family balance that could potentially contribute to family well-being.

The specific guidelines for the narrative will be provided to you once you have indicated an interest in participating.

Participation is voluntary. If you do decide to take part in the study you will have to give informed consent. If you are interested you can contact the researcher and you will be provided with an informed consent letter that contains all of the information you need.

..... YOUR PARTICIPATION WILL BE GREATLY APPRECIATED!



Please contact me telephonically or via e-mail if you are interested or if you have any questions.

Marlize Bisschoff
Tel.: 072-755-1977
E-mail: marlize1507@gmail.com

ADDENDUM 2: Demographic information form and guidelines for narratives



Dear Participant

The following document includes:

- A short demographic information form for your completion
- Guidelines for narratives

Demographic Information Form

The following questions are designed to collect participant's demographic information.

Please complete the following:

1. Age:
2. Gender: ☐ M ☐ F
3. Culture:
4. Number of years in practice:
5. Type of practice (e.g. private or NGO):

Please attach this completed form to your narrative and send it to the researcher

Guidelines for Narratives

Please write a short narrative (**one to two pages in length**) and address the following aspects therein:

1. Your perception (as a social worker) of what work-family balance is.
2. Your perception (as a social worker) of how work-family balance can potentially contribute to family well-being.
3. What strategies (with examples) you (as a social worker) regard as effective to introduce work-family balance that could potentially contribute to family well-being.

You have the option to either write the narrative by hand and scan it onto a computer and then send it via electronic mail to the researcher or post it to the researcher, or to type the narrative and send it via electronic mail to the researcher. The researcher's contact details are as follows:

Tel.:072 755 1977

E-mail.: marlize1507@gmail.com

P.O. Box: 20018

Noordbrug

Potchefstroom

2522

ADDENDUM 3: Examples of collected narratives

'n Narratief oor 'n gesonde werks-gesinsbalans.

1. My persepsie (as maatskaplike werker) oor wat werks-gesinsbalans is.

Ek is van mening dat dit 'n uiters belangrike en moeilike balans kan wees om te vind. Ek dink werk en gesinslewe het 'n groot invloed op mekaar. Ek voel dat ek deur my opleiding die nodige kennis, vaardighede en bronne opgebou het om 'n goeie werks-gesinsbalans te kan handhaaf. Ek sal enige persoon aanraai om 'n goeie werks-gesinsbalans te vind. Dit kan jou hele lewe beïnvloed en alles en almal wat vir jou belangrik is raak.

Om uit 'n maatskaplike werkers se oogpunt te praat, maatskaplike werkers en ander persone wat dienste lewer het uiteenlopende verantwoordelikhede, omdat dit deur byvoorbeeld 'n professionele Raad voorgeskryf word. In die werksplek is daar 'n te kort aan hulpbronne, ons dra die verantwoordelikheid om met kliente/pasiënte te werk wat lewensveranderende gevolge het, ons moet kantoor politiek bestuur, ons raak moeg en gefrustreerd. Net so is daar ook in ander persone wat werk in stresvolle werksomstandighede. By die huis is daar weer ander kwessies wat aandag verlang, soos verhoudinge met die gesin asook met vriende en familie, familiekwessies, rekeninge wat betaal moet word, jou eie kinders se welstand en hulle drome, ens. Beide, werk en gesin bied uitdagings en is emosioneel belaaide.

Werk en gesin moet mutueel saam funksioneer. Beide is belangrik vir ons maatskaplike welstand.

2. My persepsie (as maatskaplike werker) van hoe 'n werks-gesinsbalans potensieel kan bydra tot 'n gesin se welstand.

Wanneer die persoon instaat is om 'n goeie werks-gesins balans te handhaaf, sal hy/sy beter aandag kan gee aan die huishouding. Dit sluit in kwaliteit tyd saam met gesinslede, saam kosmaak en kuier, ontspan, saam stokperdjies geniet, ens.

Wanneer 'n persoon egter nie 'n balans kan vind nie sal die gesin daaronder lei en die kans is groot dat die gesin sal kan deterioreer, omdat verhoudings byvoorbeeld nie instand gehou is nie. Of die werk sal daaronder lei, omdat jy nie genoegsame aandag aan jou werk gee nie en swakker kwaliteit dienste lewer of jy gaan moontlik

agter raak met jou werk. Met ander woorde dit kan jou kwaliteit en kwantiteit van dienslewering beïnvloed.

3. Watse strategie (met voorbeelde) kan ek (as maatskaplike werker) as effektief ag om 'n gesonde werks-gesinsbalans voor te stel wat potensieel kan bydra tot die gesin se welstand.

In 'n neuter dop:

- Stel grense: Daar is 'n tyd om te werk en 'n tyd om saam met jou gesin deur te bring. Spandeer die tyd wat jy moet werk om op jou werk te fokus en spandeer die tyd wat jy saam met jou gesin kan deurbring, om dan volkome deel te neem aan gesinsgesprekke en aktiwiteite, sonder om aan die werk te dink.

Dit sluit in:

- Gaan huis toe wanneer die kantoor sluit. Vermoë om gereeld oor tyd te werk
- Los die werk by die werk. Vermoë om leers huis toe te vat. Vermoë, so ver moontlik, om afsprake buite kantoor ure te skeduleer.

- Kommunikeer: Indien daar goeie kommunikasie is, stel dit ander in staat om jou situasie beter te verstaan. So indien jy gefrustreerd is oor die stelsel byvoorbeeld, noem dit vir jou gesin, sodat hulle ook verdraagsaam kan wees en jou kan ondersteun sover moontlik.

Dit sluit in:

- Praat oor die werk om te ontlaai. Maar beperk dit tot byvoorbeeld 30 minute 'n dag

- Ondersteuningsnetwerk: 'n Ondersteuningsnetwerk is daar vir jou om teen te klankbord, vir leiding en advies, maar ook vir ondersteuning.

Dit sluit in:

- Ek dink dit sal goed wees indien jy 'n professionele sowel as 'n persoonlike ondersteuningsnetwerke opbou. 'n Professionele ondersteuningsnetwerk kan ander professionele persone insluit wat in 'n soortgelyke veld werk. Byvoorbeeld kollegas. Hierdie ondersteuningsnetwerk moet uitsluitlik benut word vir professionele kwessies. 'n Persoonlike ondersteuningsnetwerk kan vriende en familie insluit. Die ondersteuningsstelsel is nie daar om by te kla nie, maar

eerder daar om die gesin te versterk en positief te beïnvloed. Beide ondersteuningsnetwerke kan van onskatbare waarde wees.

- Kultuur van die maatskappy: Bestuurders het 'n groot invloed op hulle personeel se werkswyse. Ek dink dit is die bestuurders se verantwoordelikheid om personeel te help om 'n balans te kry.

Dit sluit is:

- Om nie werk te gee 'n paar minute voor die kantoor sluit nie
- Om personeel te bemoedig en te help om die eise wat die professie stel beter te kan hanteer. Deur byvoorbeeld supervisie, groep supervisie opleidingsgeleenthede, ens.
- Genadig te wees en begrip te toon teenoor die personeel se gesin. Byvoorbeeld indien 'n kind siek is en die personeellid dringend moet ry om die kind te gaan help.

Indien dit nie die kultuur is van jou werksplek nie, dink ek dit sal goed wees indien daar deur die regte kanale beweeg word om dit te laat realiseer.

Narrative regarding work-family balance

1. Perspective of what work-family balance is

Work-family balance is finding a healthy balance between the responsibilities of work and the responsibilities of family. It entails the amount of time spent on each area as well as the emotional energy spent in each area. Finding a balance in different aspects of one's life is part of a healthy lifestyle and wellbeing. It is a trial and error process and changes as the responsibilities in each area changes. At its core, it feels like a juggling act.

2. Perception of how work-family balance can potentially contribute to family well-being

When work-family balance is accomplished, each area receives the best possible attention you can give. Your work can be positive and effective, with your patients getting effective social work services and the possible problems at home not affecting your work. This is not always that easy, as problems at home affect us deeply and can affect many areas of our life. The same can be said of problems at work affecting home life. When we deal with difficult cases or are exposed to difficult social circumstances it affects us. At times it is difficult to shake of the dust of what we experience at work when we enter our home. But when a balance is achieved, the members of the family feel supported, loved and cared for. Children get attention and married life stays a priority. When this happens, it contributes to a positive family life with healthy relationships and sustained well-being.

3. Effective strategies for work-family balance

Finding work-family balance takes time, effort and even experience. It's a bit of a juggling act and figuring out what works for you. Part of the strategies I use is compartmentalisation. Putting the worries of work in its own box and putting it away for working hours when you get home and vice versa.

Support at work and home is extremely important. If your department at work is a close-knit group, they become like family. Thus you are supported at work and there is an openness to discuss possible issues at home. This makes it easier to focus on work when you receive support from colleagues. At home it's a bit different. Social work is a very serious profession with its own challenges and issues. At times, our family members do not understand the severity of what we deal with or the effect it

has on us. Even though they mean well, they struggling to support in the same way our colleagues do. This is why it's important to get specific social work support from colleagues and get emotional personal support from family. Be selective in what you tell as confidentiality is always an issue. But never underestimate the importance of family. When there is adequate support, it's easier to find a balance between work and family. It's easier to leave work at work and focus on family.

Prioritising is another strategy I employ to find balance in my life. It is a deliberate thought process to determine what is important and what is not. Certain tasks might need to wait or be delegated so that priorities can be accomplished. It is at times difficult to determine what is important between work and family.

Lastly, open communication is important so that both areas of your life know what is going on in the other area. If you need to work late, your family are aware of the reasons when there is a difficult case. When you have a family responsibility, your work is willing to accommodate you because they are aware of what is happening in your family.

You have to be motivated to give your best in both areas otherwise an area will suffer.

Guidelines for Narratives

As a social worker my definition of work-family balance (WFB) involves keeping strict boundaries between work and home life. Furthermore it involves being mentally present when in either space. If I look at the construct from an eco-systems view point I believe that the boundary between the two must be permeable and flexible because in today's world it's difficult to keep rigid boundaries. WFB also to be is not about being everything or being present for every event/meeting etc but about doing what you essentially need to do.

As a social worker having experience in the child protection field I believe that balance in all aspects of one's life is important. In a technologically advanced world with time becoming an important commodity where working professionals are expected to be available 24/7 if there is not balance between both dimensions one will suffer neglect. As money is essential it is often the home dimension that suffers neglect. Having a strong family-work balance will ensure that children are raised feeling that their parents are present and this, in my opinion, forms the foundation for secure attachment. Burnout will also occur if a client is trying to view the construct like a check list with tasks to do. True balance allows for individuality and promotes a sense of fulfillment in both dimensions. Happy people have happy marriages and raise happy children.

However in my experience as a social worker it is hard for clients to manage this balance without understanding how to prioritize. This often the first skill I work with clients on as WFB is about being able to understand when something needs to cross the boundary and when it does not. Part of this may include developing and sticking to a routine to include structure and manage expectations from work and family. Tasks may include developing an essential job description for home and work as well as understanding choices and locus of control.

Assertiveness is often important as many managers will expect a work to be available at the drop of a hat. Many of the executives that I have worked with have stated that the success to their ability to balance their lives lies in understanding why they are working and what their job role is. Developing awareness of this will enable prioritisation and assertiveness.

I also often work with clients around developing transitioning activities to ensure that they are mentally present in either space. This may include taking 15 minutes before or

from all the bad experiences and enjoy time with people that you love and who love you back. This balance then works as a debriefing aspect for the social worker.

3. What strategies are regarded as effective to introduce work-family balance that could potentially contribute to family well-being?

I think the following ways are essential in introducing work-family balance:

- Determine how much time you want to dedicate to your job and to your family.
- Prioritise your time and also be willing to compromise at times.
- Effective communication between all parties involved, especially with scheduled times. Also when there is a stressful time at work or at home.
- For the family always have a day where there will be no work and you will dedicate that day to family or friends or as some alone time for yourself.
- For people that do not know the benefits of work-balance, a seminar will be good just to educate them to understand why this important.
- You can also give yourself some incentives to reinforce following the work balance that you have determined.

ADDENDUM 4: Work protocol for co-coder

Dear

You are hereby invited to act as a co-coder for the study entitled “*An exploration of social workers' perceptions of family well-being and the balance between work and family domains.*”

The research question posed is: What are social workers’ perceptions of work-family balance and family well-being?

The aim of the study is to explore social workers’ perceptions of work-family balance and family well-being in a group of South African social workers.

Narratives are used to collect the data and the participants are asked to write a short, one to two page narrative on the participant’s:

- perception (as a social worker) of what work-family balance is,
- perception (as a social worker) of how work-family balance can potentially contribute to family well-being,
- What strategies (with examples) the participant (as a social worker) regard as effective to introduce work-family balance that could potentially contribute to family well-being

For the purpose of this study, thematic analysis will be used to manually analyse the data. The six steps suggested by Clarke and Braun (2013) and Braun and Clarke (2006) will be followed when analysing the collected data, namely: Familiarisation with the data, coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming the themes, and writing up. The six steps to be followed when analysing the data are as follows:

1. **Familiarisation with the data:** You will have to first be familiar with the collected data by means of organising and preparing the data for analysis.
2. **Coding:** Data then has to be coded. This is a process of reading through data so that segments that are featuring consistently will receive labels indicating the importance of data and that are relevant to answer the research questions as indicated above.

3. ***Searching for themes:*** Themes are constructed by the researcher through identifying meaningful patterns similarity in the collected data. Before moving onto the next step, you have to end this stage by ordering the coded data that are relevant to a specific theme.
4. ***Reviewing themes:*** It is also important to review the identified themes so that it will be convincing to readers. The nature of each theme will be discussed separately followed by explaining the relationship between themes.
5. ***Defining and naming the themes:*** Themes have to now be explained in detail, mentioning the critical aspects of each theme, in order to identify a name for the theme.
6. ***Writing up:*** The analysed data has to now be integrated, interpreted and contextualized with existing literature.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,

M Bisschoff

E-mail: marlize1507@gmail.com

Tel.:072 755 1977

NOTE: Please complete the confidentiality agreement on the next page if you are willing to act as co-coder and send it back to me.



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
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South Africa 2520

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Dear Co-coder,

You have agreed to act as co-coder for the study titled "An exploration of social workers' perceptions of family well-being and the balance between work and family domains". You are required to sign the confidentiality agreement below.

Confidentiality agreement

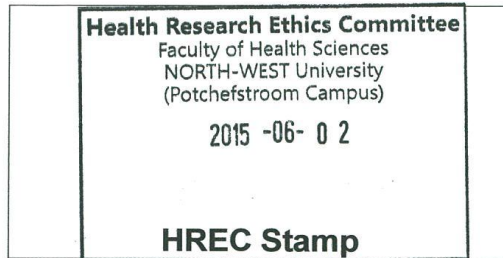
I, Emmerentia du Plessis (insert name), hereby state that I will not disclose any of the information (including participants' identities and data) that I come into contact with in my capacity as a co-coder for the study titled "An exploration of social workers' perceptions of family well-being and the balance between work and family domains" to any member who is not part of the research team. I am aware of my responsibility to protect participants' identities and the information that they share and accept that if I do not keep to this agreement, I may be held liable.

Signed at (place) Potchefstroom on (date) 5/8 2015

[Signature]
Signature of co-coder

[Signature]
Signature of witness

ADDENDUM 5: Informed consent form



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT: An exploration of social workers' perceptions of family well-being and the balance between work and family domains

REFERENCE NUMBERS: NWU-00076-13-A1

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Marlize Bisschoff

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CONTACT NUMBER: 072 755 1977

You are being invited to take part in a research project that forms part of the fulfilment for my Master's degree in Positive Psychology. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project. Please ask the researcher any questions about any part of this project that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research entails and how you could be involved. Also, your participation is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to decline to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part. Please also note that the research may be terminated earlier in particular circumstances.

This study is a sub-study of the umbrella programme: "A multi-disciplinary programme to enhance family well-being in different South African contexts: Phase one", which has already been approved by the Health Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the North-West University (ethics number: NWU-00076-13-A1). The primary investigator of the umbrella programme is Dr Vicki Koen, e-mail address: 12976121@nwu.ac.za.

This study has been approved by the **Health Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the North-West University (NWU-00076-13-A1)** and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the international Declaration of Helsinki and the ethical guidelines of the National Health Research Ethics Council. It might be necessary for the research ethics committee members or relevant authorities to inspect the research records. This research is funded by the National Research Foundation who only requires recognition of their financial contribution when reporting the results.

What is this research study all about?

- *This study will be conducted across South Africa and will involve narrative inquiry with experienced health researchers trained in the methods used (qualitative research, specifically narrative inquiry and thematic analysis). The number of participants that will be included in this study will be determined by data saturation (the point at which data becomes repetitive and no new themes emerge).*
- *The aim of this research is to explore social workers' perceptions of work-family balance and family well-being in a group of South African social workers.*

Why have you been invited to participate?

- *You have been invited to participate because you are a social worker in South Africa.*
- *You have also complied with the following inclusion criteria: You are registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) as a social worker, you are a practicing social worker, you are literate in English, and you are willing to participate.*

What is the procedure?

- *Once potential participants have indicated a willingness to participate, they are contacted telephonically by an outside party who provide them with a copy of the informed consent form (either by electronic mail or post).*
- *Once you have received the informed consent form, you will have a week to study the form and have an opportunity to contact the researcher if you have any questions.*
- *Once you have given informed consent, the researcher will provide you with the demographic information form for completion as well as the specific guidelines for the compilation of your narrative (please see section on "What will your responsibilities be").*

What will your responsibilities be?

- *You will be expected to provide some of your demographic information (specifically age, gender, culture, number of years in practice and type of practice) and to write a single and short one to two page narrative on your perceptions (as a social worker) of what work-family balance is, how work-family balance can potentially contribute to family well-being and what strategies (with examples) you regard as effective to introduce work-family balance that could potentially contribute to family well-being. Once you have given informed consent, you will be provided with the demographic information form and specific guidelines for your narrative by the researcher.*

- You will have the option to either write the narrative by hand or post it to the researcher, to write it by hand and scan it onto a computer and then send it via electronic mail to the researcher, or to type the narrative and send it via electronic mail to the researcher.

Will you benefit from taking part in this research?

- There will unfortunately be no direct benefits for you, but you may indirectly benefit from the study by gaining an understanding of your perceptions of work-family balance and family well-being. You may also come to understand and identify ways that can improve or contribute to your work-family balance and/or family well-being.
- A further indirect benefit will be that the knowledge gained through this research may benefit society with regard to the understanding of work-family balance and family well-being.

Are there risks involved in your taking part in this research?

- This research has a low likelihood of trivial harm. Physical harm in the form of fatigue, headaches, boredom, discomfort, and muscle tension related to the data collection method may be experienced. Psychological harm or emotional harm may occur due to self-disclosure or answering personal questions during data collection. Apart from possible postage costs, there will be no costs involved for taking part in this research study.
- The benefits outweigh the risks.

What will happen in the unlikely event of some form of discomfort occurring as a direct result of your taking part in this research study?

- Should you have the need for further discussions after any mental discomfort or distress during or as a result of your participation, you must inform the researcher who will provide you with the contact information of a helping and qualified professional to provide telephonic emotional containment and support if necessary.

Who will have access to the data?

- Confidentiality will be ensured by doing the following: Your identity or name will not be disclosed and will not be documented in the manuscript and/or publication of the research. Collected data will be used exclusively for research purposes. Only the consent forms you sign will identify you. Narratives will be labelled with a unique number and no one (apart from the researchers) will be able to identify you. Only the members of the research team will have access to the information you provide.
- The Health Research Ethics Committee also has the right to inspect research records.
- At the completion of the research, the research results may be used for publications in books, journals, and websites or for conference papers or presentations. Reporting of findings will be anonymous by protecting your confidentiality as stated above and not disclosing your identity. Only the researchers and a co-coder will have access to the data and the co-coder will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement which states that he/she may not disclose the information they are appointed to co-code.

- *Data will be kept safe and secure by locking hard copies in locked cupboards in the researcher's office and for electronic data it will be password protected. Data will be stored for seven years after the publication of results.*
- *E-mails sent to communicate the results to participants will only be sent to one participant at a time and after e-mails have been sent, they will be deleted from the researcher's mailbox/sent items to protect your identity.*

What will happen with the data?

- *This is a once off collection and data will be analysed in South Africa.*

Will you be paid to take part in this study and are there any costs involved?

- *No, you will not be paid to take part in the study. Apart from possible postage costs (if you prefer to post your narrative), there will be no costs involved for you if you do take part.*

Are there any conflicts of interest?

- *There are no existing conflicts of interests that the researchers are aware of.*

Is there anything else that you should know or do?

- *You can contact Mrs Marlize Bisschoff at e-mail: marlize1507@gmail.com or tel.: 072 755 1977 or her supervisor, Dr Vicki Koen, at e-mail: 12976121@nwu.ac.za if you have any further queries or encounter any problems.*
- *You can contact the Health Research Ethics Committee via Mrs Carolien van Zyl at 018 299 2089; carolien.vanzyl@nwu.ac.za if you have any concerns or complaints that have not been adequately addressed by the researcher.*
- *Please keep a copy of this information and consent form for your own records. You can send your completed informed consent form to the researcher via post or electronic mail.*

How will you know about the findings?

- *A summary of the findings of the research will be shared with you by electronic mail after the completion of the study and on your request. Please indicate in the future contact page below if you would like to receive a summary of the results and provide an e-mail address.*

Declaration by participant

By signing below, I agree to take part in a research study titled: An exploration of social workers' perceptions of family well-being and the balance between work and family domains.

I declare that:

- I have read this information and consent form and it is written in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person obtaining consent, as well as the researcher and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in my best interests, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*)
20....

.....
Signature of participant

.....
Signature of witness

Future contact page

Would you like us to send you a short summary of the study's findings when it is completed?

No/Yes

If yes, please provide an e-mail address where you would like us to send it:

Please note that e-mails will only be sent to one participant at a time and after e-mails have been sent, they will be deleted from the researcher's mailbox/sent items to protect your identity.

Declaration by person obtaining consent

I (name) declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I did/did not use an interpreter.

Signed at (place) on (date)
20....

.....
Signature of person obtaining consent

.....
Signature of witness

Declaration by researcher

I (name) declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I did/did not use an interpreter.

Signed at (place) on (date)
20....

.....
Signature of researcher

.....
Signature of witness