

Model for family psychosocial well-being in a South African context

Dr Vicki Koen

12976121@nwu.ac.za

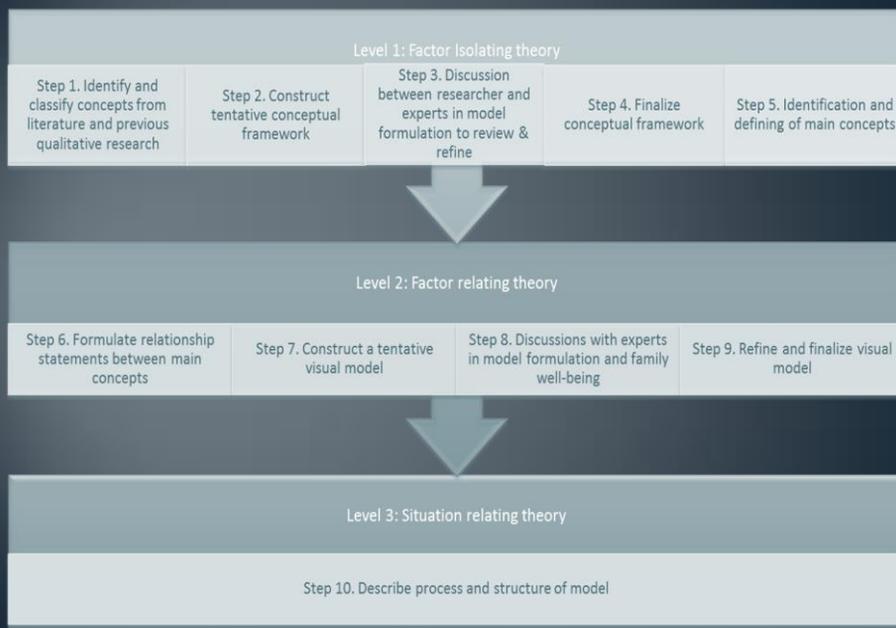
Introduction & background

- This research formed part of a larger two-stage study, in which the first stage consisted of both a quantitative- and qualitative phase. In the first quantitative phase a cross-sectional survey design was used and data collected through validated psychological measuring instruments. The participants included youths attending five secondary schools in the Gauteng province (N = 772). The percentages reported for psychosocial well-being were as follows: low: 17.2%, low to moderate: 24.6%, moderate: 22.5%, moderate to high: 15.2% and high: 20.5%. From these results families were then identified for participation in the second qualitative phase. The qualitative phase explored and described aspects that contribute to the psychosocial well-being of families from diverse cultures in a South African context by analyzing data obtained through written narratives, drawings and interviews with families. Participant families took part voluntarily in family interviews (n=36), narratives (n=23) and drawings (n=14). The findings from the qualitative phase were then used as empirical data for this stage (stage two) of the research.

Methodology

- This research, which presents the process of theory generation that underpins the development of a conceptual framework and model, describes it in three levels according to the approach of Dickoff, James, and Wiedenbach (1968). This approach to theory generation was chosen based on the clarity of the steps provided in order to develop a visual model. Only three levels of this process were applied in this study (see Figure 1) as the fourth level focuses on the testing of hypothesis and operationalization of a model once it has been finalized.

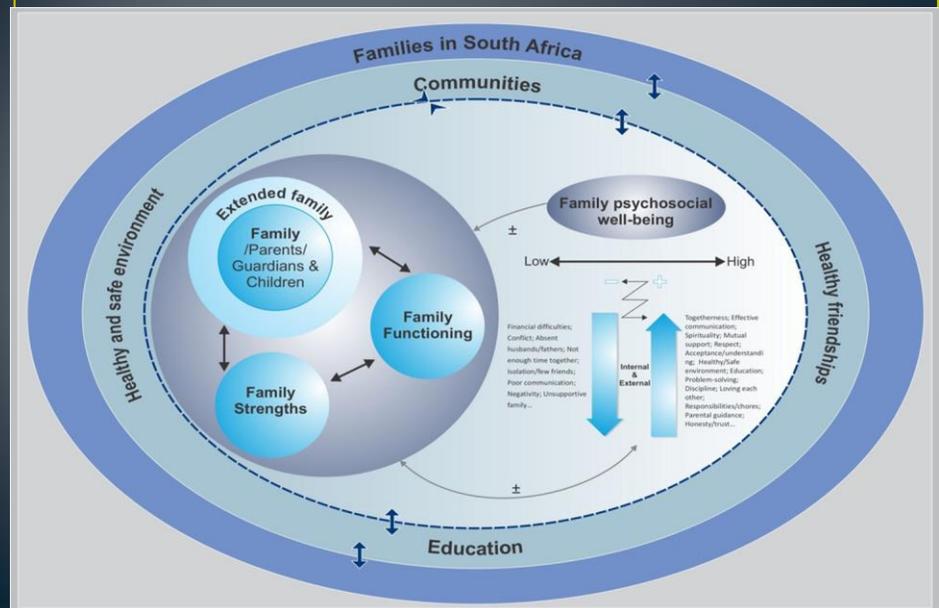
Figure 1. Flow of the research process



The final model

- After discussions with the experts, changes and new ideas were incorporated into the tentative model in order to finalize the model for family psychosocial well-being in a South African context. Based on feedback and discussions, the model was enhanced to better portray the complexity and circular (instead of linear) flow of the process, the internal and external nature of hindering and contributing factors instead of an external nature only, and more circular structures were included to express unity and continuity. Moreover, the model was enhanced by including a wider concept of family such as the inclusion of guardians, to prevent narrowing the types of families that the model caters for. The final model acts as a basis for illustrating the relationships and dimensions of the phenomenon of family psychosocial well-being (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Model for family psychosocial well-being in a South African context



Process of the model

- The process of the model for family psychosocial well-being in a South African context indicates that there is interaction and interrelatedness between the family, family strengths and family functioning. Family in this instance refers to a fundamental group of people consisting of parents and children, but in a South African context it is necessary to incorporate guardians and extended family into the definition of family. The reason for this is that the traditional nuclear family (referred to in South African law and Euro-American literature) or even single-parent households do not always represent the true reality of South African families' composition (Holborn & Eddy, 2011). Furthermore, extended family has been found to play a very important role in some families (Magona, 1990; Mbiti, 1989).

- The family makes use of family strengths (the qualities, abilities and resources they have available to them that give them an advantage), as well as family functioning (their proper activity, purpose and characteristics), to interact. If this interaction is successful, it can influence or generate contributing factors that can enhance the psychosocial well-being (happiness, health and prosperity in both psychological and social aspects) of families. These contributing factors may further influence the family or the successful interaction between the family, family strengths and family functioning. On the other hand, less effective interaction between the family, family strengths and family functioning, can influence or be influenced by hindering factors, leading to the family experiencing medium to low family psychosocial well-being. The contributing and hindering factors are expressed as both internal and external factors.

- The model also indicates that there is a dependency and interdependency as the family exists in larger contexts such as communities and the nation, which also play a role and have an influence or can be influenced by the family. Therefore, the family has a responsibility to the community to contribute in supportive, productive and creative ways toward the growth and well-being of the community. The community in turn influences the family and aspects such as healthy friendships, healthy and safe environments and education that can contribute to family psychosocial well-being. This dependency and interdependency not only emphasizes the role of families and communities, but also the nation, and in particular, the South African government. Government has a responsibility to South African families and communities to provide career and education opportunities, proper infrastructure, health facilities, safe environments and other resources that may promote growth. This assumption is supported by the findings of Holborn and Eddy (2011).

- The model's visual representation, structure and process (discussed above) illustrate the complexity of the process of family psychosocial well-being, the uniqueness of South African families, the potential for growth and the interdependence that exists between the contexts in the most effective manner. The model depicts the importance of providing structure, a solid foundation and vision for the future, in order to empower South Africa's youth and possibly future generations with family related skills and knowledge. Every family has a responsibility toward itself and its members (especially its younger members) to learn family related skills and take the time to invest in, and nurture the psychosocial well-being of the family.

Also see:

- Koen, V., Van Eeden, C., Rothmann, S. (2012). An exploration of families' psychosocial well-being in a South African context. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 22(3), 343-358.
- Koen, V., Van Eeden, C., & Rothmann, S. (2013). A model for psychosocial well-being of families in a South African context. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 23(1), 155-164.
- Koen, V. (2012). Family psychosocial well-being in a South African context (Unpublished doctoral thesis). North-West University, Potchefstroom, SA.

THANK YOU