

Perceptions of positive youth functioning

Lessons from the dynamics of context and well-being

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OPTENTIA RESEARCH PROGRAMME

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A promise from the abstract

" As socio-environmental context plays a role in well-being outcomes and youth development, the critical questions before the

"how are they doing?"

ought to be

"who are they?" and **"where are they?"**.

The environment, including schools, families and community neighborhoods, within which youth live, and how they are affected by it forms an important part of my enquiry."

At the end:

1. A case for holistic well-being
2. A case for youth and their well-being
3. Dynamics of youth holistic positive functioning, and their socio-, cultural-, political-, economic-, and environmental context
4. Future considerations

Well-being is complex and multi-faceted

1. Multiple **positive** characteristics of the **individual**
2. Both **positive** and **negative** characteristics and experiences
3. Both subjective and trait level **individual** and objective indicators of **context** and process

World Health Organization

- Mental Health (2004): "a state of well-being in which the individual
  - realizes his/her own abilities,
  - can cope with the normal stresses of life,
  - can work productively and fruitfully, and
  - is able to make a contribution to his/her community"

- Health (1948): "state of **complete** physical, **mental and social well-being** and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity"

Positive Psychology

3 areas of human experience
(Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000)

1. Positive subjective states
   - E.g. Emotions; vitality; contentment
2. Positive individual traits
   - E.g. individual strengths and virtues
3. Positive institutions
   - E.g. Civic virtues; positive work environments; positive communities

Examples of models in support

- General Psychological Well-being (Wissing & Van Eeden, 2002; Wissing & Temane, 2008)
- Psychological Well-Being (Ryff, 1989)
- Mental Health Continuum (Keyes, 2002)
- Dual systems model (Wong, 2012)

GPW (Wissing and others)

- Integrated overlap between hedonic and eudaimonic well-being
- Complex multi-faceted and hierarchically organized higher order factor consisting of facets of self and relationships capturing a holistic conceptualisation of well-being
- Reflects the positive cognitive, affective, conative, interpersonal, social, spiritual experience, and absence of distress
    1. Positive affect and meaningful satisfaction
    2. Negative affect and poor coping
    3. Positive meaningful relatedness
    4. Vitality

Lessons from Resilience (Ungar, 2011)

1. Decentrality
   - Deemphasize the child and include greater role of environment; e.g. characteristics of a neighborhood
2. Complexity
   - Beyond just a list of protective processes/factors
   - Dynamic changes in the context/environment; in transitions / migrations / movements; in developmental stages / lifespan
3. Atypicality
   - Process-focused: the context decides the usefulness of the qualities and/or processes
4. Cultural relativity
   - Must be both culturally and temporally embedded
   - (Idiosyncratic – local culture) – (homogenised global culture)

Lessons from SPECS (Prilleltensky, 2005)

		Sites of well-being		
		Personal	**Relational**	**Collective**
Signs	Personal	Control	Affirming partners	Health and longevity
	Relational	Satisfying relationships	Enduring friendships	Affirmation of diversity and lack of envy
	Collective	Sense of community	Norms of mutual support	Support for universal health care
Sources	Personal	Self-efficacy	Developmental needs met	Personal contribution to commonwealth
	Relational	Nurturance	Prior experiences of respect and affirmation	Appreciation of interdependence
	Collective	Quality health and education	Norms that promote collaboration	Culture that supports interdependence
Strategies	Personal	Empowerment	Empathy and social skills	Collective and political intelligence
	Relational	Input in partnership	Conflict resolution and growth orientation	Social support and recognition for social change
	Collective	Political participation	Norms that affirm mutuality and oppose competition	Social movement opposing injustice

Assets

(Benson and colleagues; e.g. Scales, Benson, Leffert, & Blyth, 2000)

- 40 internal and external assets in 8 categories

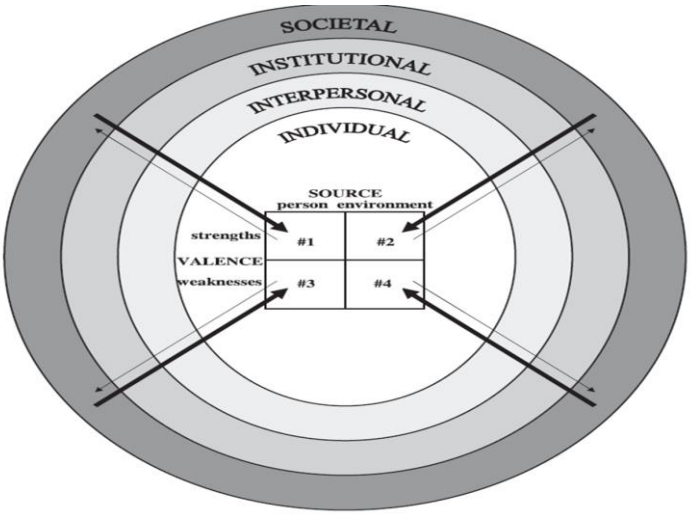
External	Internal
Support	Commitment to learning
Empowerment	Positive values
Boundaries and expectations	Social competencies
Constructive use of time	Positive identity

Subjective well-being alone is not enough

Eckersley (2013)

- Individual WB, not for progress of society
- Acontextual personal satisfaction v/s social assessment of personal circumstances
  - E.g. Item: "Now thinking of your (***) life, how satisfied are you with your personal life **today**?
- Bias towards individualistic societies, i.e. greater emphasis on personal life aspects, not social context

Matrix model embedded in the individual, interpersonal, institutional, and social-community levels (Snyder & Elliot, 2005)



How should youth then be?

"Indeed, any nation that claims to prepare its youth to become **democratically engaged citizens** must have youth who know how to be, and feel integrated into society, contributing to society, accepting people not like them, working to improve and understand society, to have a purpose in life, self-accepting and autonomous, but also able to cultivate positive relations with others while exerting some mastery over their immediate environments and, above all, **capable of continued personal growth throughout life**" (Keyes, 2013, p.21).

Why should we bother?

- We are investing in the future:
  - Health is a form of human capital
    - Contribute to social and economic prosperity
  - Mental illness is a burden
    - Hinders productivity; Public health issue
  - Adult models and adult-oriented theories and interventions are not always sufficient

A case for youth

- Previous research in PP has tended to focus on the hedonic dimension
- Keyes (2013) findings from earlier CDS data found:
  - High Emotional well-being
  - Moderate Psychological well-being
  - But low Social well-being
- Social well-being:
  1. Something to contribute
  2. Belong somewhere
  3. The way society works makes sense
  4. Society is becoming a better place
  5. People in society are basically good

A case for youth, cont.

- Happiness as Subjective Well-being (pos. ass.):
  - Self-confidence, self-efficacy and competence
  - Meaningful and sustained positive relationships with others
  - Character and prosocial behavior
  - Less conduct problems

- Implications for parents:
  - Raising children who are to be happy, psychologically healthy and be socially healthy and engaged human beings

Who are they?

- Age categories and terminology (WHO, 1998)
  - Youth = 15 – 24 years
  - Young people = 10 – 24 years
  - Adolescents = 10 – 19 years

- Basic: Dependent child to independent adult transition: 10 – 24 years

African youth/adolescent

- Socialization of adolescents differs across cultures; and often different between genders
- African traditional practice of "initiation school"; "social internship"; "ritual celebration of puberty"
  - Cultivation of virtuous character
  - Instilling of values of cooperation and generosity
- But in today's contemporary multi-cultural global village, it is not enough

The African adolescent in the world

- "**Africa** has **irreversibly** been drawn into a global culture that is essentially **Eurocentric**" (Nsamenang, 2002, p.65)
- Essentially culturally plural societies (Berry, 2006)

Formal education	Family-based traditional socialization
Rapid urbanization and commercialization	Indigenous African cultural systems

Youth well-being: Multiple facets

- **Positive mental health** (Flourishing; Keyes, 2002, 2006, 2013)
- **Hope** (Snyder, 1995; Snyder et al., 1991)
- **Depression** (Kroenke et al., 2001)
- **Satisfaction with life** (Diener, 2000; Diener et al., 1985)
- **Motivation and basic psychological needs** (Ryan & Deci, Sheldon & Hilpert, 2012)
- **Meaning in life** (Steger, 2009, 2012; Steger et al., 2006)

Flourishing

- Positive mental health as represented by positive feelings and positive functioning
  - Occurs along a range/spectrum from Languishing to Flourishing
  - Not the opposite end on psychopathology (e.g. Depression)
  - Consists of PWB, SWB, and EWB
- MHC-SF has 14 items (Keyes, 2002, 2006; Keyes et al., 2008)

Hopeful

- "We are intrinsically goal-oriented when we think about our future" (Snyder, 1995, p.355)
- High hope: approach goals with positive emotional state, sense of challenge, and focus on success
- Two components:
  1. Agency = the cognitive willpower or energy to get ahead (goal-directed determination)
  2. Pathways = the ability to generate routes to get there (planning of ways to meet goals)
- The Hope Scale has 12 items (Snyder, 1995; Snyder et al., 1991)

Not depressed

- The DSM IV-TR gives nine symptoms as a description of an MDD episode
- degree of depression ranges from mild to severe
- PHQ-9 has 10 items (Kroenke, Spitzer, & Williams, 2001)

Satisfied with life

- The cognitive component of subjective well-being as a global evaluation of how one think he is doing
  - Often accompanied by positive affect balance as the emotional component
- SWLS has five items (Diener et al., 1985)

Motivated

- The fulfillment or satisfaction of basic psychological needs is a condition for motivation and subsequent well-being
  - **Autonomy:** behavior is self-endorsed
  - **Competence:** feeling of mastery and efficacy
  - **Relatedness:** sense of connectedness and prosocial intentions
-
- The BMPN has 18 items (Sheldon & Hilpert, 2012)
  - Regards the three needs as balanced equals
  - Separates Needs satisfaction from Needs frustration

Have a sense of meaning and purpose

- Meaning in life: "the sense made of, and significance felt regarding, the nature of one's being and existence" (Steger, 2006, p.81)
  - **Presence of meaning:** degree of understanding + making sense + significance of life; purpose, mission and global aim
  - **Search for meaning:** efforts to establish and/or augment one's comprehension and significance of life's aim and purpose
  - Simply – presence is destination, and search is journey (Steger & Kashdan, 2013)
- MLQ has 10 items (Steger et al., 2006)

The critical questions?

1. How are they doing?
2. What is the South African context like?
3. How does family and community influence well-being and positive functioning outcomes?
4. Who are they and where are they?



Let's find out what some data are telling us…

Data: How are they doing?

- Explore data from 977 young people attending schools in a relatively rural area in the North West Province; Collected in 2013
- Make links between:

Independent variables	Dependent variables
Family functioning	Positive mental health
	Hope
	Meaning
Sense of community	Depression
	Basic psychological needs
	Satisfaction with life

Associations between indices of well- (and ill-) being

	MIL-P	MIL-S	BPN-R	BPN-C	BPN-A	Hope-P	Hope-A	SWL	MHC-E	MHC-P	MHC-S	PHQ-9
MIL-P	1											
MIL-S	.26**	1										
BPN-R	.21**	.16**	1									
BPN-C	.28**	.18**	.30**	1								
BPN-A	.24**	.20**	.34**	.32**	1							
Hope-P	.09*	.20**	.12**	.11**	.07*	1						
Hope-A	.37**	.28**	.15**	.25**	.09**	.40**	1					
SWL	.35**	.16**	.22**	.13**	.19**	.11**	.19**	1				
MHC-E	.37**	.11**	.20**	.17**	.20**	.04	.17**	.33**	1			
MHC-P	.41**	.23**	.24**	.23**	.22**	.13**	.31**	.25**	.47**	1		
MHC-S	.17**	.07*	.18**	.11**	.12**	.05	.13**	.35**	.44**	.40**	1	
PHQ-9	-.24	.04	-.12**	-.08	-.09*	.33**	.06	-.04	-.22**	-.15**	.07	1

Family functioning

The McMaster model; used the FAD (Epstein and colleagues; e.g. Miller et al., 2000)

- Based on systems theory
  - All parts are interrelated
  - Behavior is influenced by 1. Structure and 2. transactional patterns
- Dimensions:

1. Problem solving: Instrumental and affective
2. Communication: Instrumental and affective
3. Roles: Tasks – necessary and other
4. Affective responsiveness: Quantity and quality
5. Affective involvement: Interest in the others
6. Behavior control: Rules and standards of conduct

Sense of community

Chavis, Lee, & Acosta (2008); McMillan & Chavis (1986)

Community: 1. Geographical demarcation; 2. Relational quality

- Dimensions

1. Membership:
   - Feeling of belonging to or sharing a sense of personal relatedness
2. Influence:
   - Sense that you matter and can make a difference to the group
3. Meeting needs
   - Sense that one's needs would be met by community resources by virtue of membership
4. Shared emotional connection
   - Belief and commitment to shared experiences over time

Family functioning and meaning

	Meaning: Search	Meaning: Presence
General Family Functioning	-.046	-.051

- Presence of meaning

Adj R^2 =.001,F(1)=1.766,p=.184

- Search for meaning

Adj R^2 =.001,F(1)=1.453,p=.228

Family functioning and psychological needs

	Need: R	Need: C	Need: A
General Family Functioning	-.159**	-.122**	-.045

- Need: Relatedness

Adj R^2 =.024,F(1)=17.065,p=.000

- Need: Competence

Adj R^2 =.013,F(1)=9.815,p=002

- Need: Autonomy

Adj R^2 =.001,F(1)=1.407,p=.236

Family functioning and hope

	Hope: Pathways	Hope: Agency
General family functioning	.001	-.041

- Hope: Pathways

Adj R^2 =-.002,F(1)=0.001,p=.972

- Hope: Agency

Adj R^2 =.000,F(1)=1.083,p=.298

Family functioning and depression

	Depression
General Family Functioning	.067

Adj R^2 =.003,F(1)=2.609,p=.107

Family functioning and life satisfaction

	Life satisfaction
General Family Functioning	-.056

Adj R^2 =.002,F(1)=2.112,p=.147

Family functioning and positive mental health

	EWB	PWB	SWB
General Family Functioning	-.109**	-.149**	-.066

- Emotional WB

R^2 =.010,F(1)=8.413,p=.004

- Psychological WB

R^2 =.021,F(1)=15.062,p=.000

- Social WB

R^2 =.003,F(1)=2.855,p=.092

Sense of community and Meaning

	Meaning in Life-S	Meaning in Life-P
SC: Reinforcement of needs	.099**	.135**
SC: Membership	.093**	.162**
SC: Influence	.137**	.095**
SC: Shared Emotional Connectedness	.079*	.100**

- Presence of meaning

Adj R^2 =.031,F(4)=6.110,p=.000

- SC-I: beta = -.124, p=.049

- Search for meaning

Adj R^2 =.019,F4)=4.031,p=.003

- SC-I: beta = .174, p=.005

Sense of community and Hope

	Hope-P	Hope-A
SC: Reinforcement of needs	.014	.082*
SC: Membership	.209	.150**
SC: Influence	.021	.114**
SC: Shared Emotional Connectedness	.016	.108**

- Pathways

R^2 =-.002,F(4)=.667,p=.615

- Agency

R^2 =.024,F(4)=4.892,p=.001

- RN: beta=-.069, p=.000
- M: .132, p=.034

Sense of community and basic psychological needs

	Need: R	Need: C	Need: A
SC: Reinforcement of needs	.078*	.133**	.046
SC: Membership	.078*	.126**	.093**
SC: Influence	.108**	.108**	.051
SC: Shared Emotional Connectedness	.109**	.085*	.045

- Relatedness

R^2 =.007,F(4)=2.101,p=.079

- Competence

R^2 =.012,F(4)=2.892,p=.022

- Autonomy

R^2 =.008,F(4)=2.245,p=.063

Sense of community and depression

	Depression
SC: Reinforcement of needs	.027
SC: Membership	.024
SC: Influence	-.027
SC: Shared Emotional Connectedness	.005

R^2 =-.004,F(4)=.456,p=.768

Sense of community and satisfaction with life

	Satisfaction with life
SC: Reinforcement of needs	.306**
SC: Membership	.259**
SC: Influence	.234**
SC: Shared Emotional Connectedness	.281**

R^2 =.110,F(4)=21.203,p=.000

- RN: beta=.205, p=.000
- SEC: beta=.172, p=.007

Sense of community and mental health

	MHC-EWB	MHC-PWB	MHC-SWB
SC: Reinforcement of needs	.194**	.124**	.433**
SC: Membership	.21**	.165**	.420**
SC: Influence	.178**	.144**	.434**
SC: Shared Emotional Connectedness	.203**	.194**	.511**

- Emotional WB

R^2 =.037,F(4)=7.114,p=.000

- M: beta=.145, p=.019

- Psychological WB

R^2 =.065,F(4)=12.489,p=.000

- SEC: beta=.180, p=.007

- Social WB

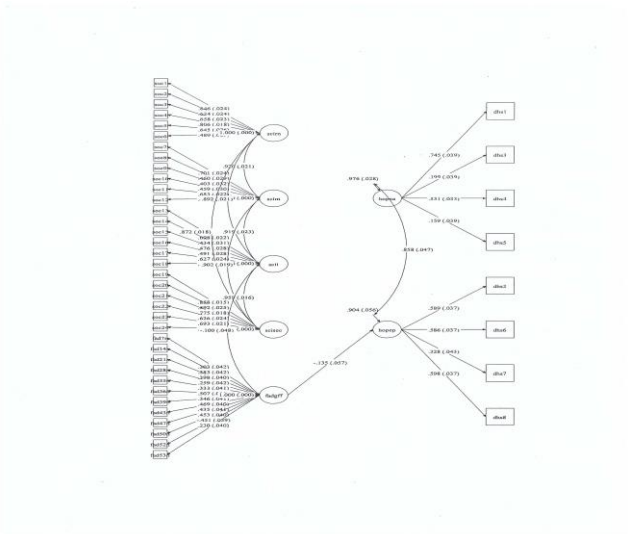
R^2 =.333,F(4)=79.633,p=.000

- SEC: beta=.459, p=.000

SEM Direct effects models

- IV = Family functioning and sense of community
- DV = Hope; Flourishing; Life satisfaction; Depression

DV	CFI	TLI
Hope	.953	.950
Flourishing	.962	.959
Life satisfaction	.960	.957
Depression	.955	.953



South African landscape (Moller, 2012)

- Demography:
  - Geographical distribution of the population is changing
- Political
  - Rising discontent with corruption, maladministration, incompetence, and inefficiency – Citizen protests
- Economy:
  - Increase in GDP, but failure to create jobs
  - Youth unemployment rate = 49.7% in 2011
- Poverty and income inequality
  - Significant alleviation of poverty at the bottom end;
  - But increasing inequality

South African landscape (Moller, 2012), cont.

- Social assistance
  - Greater variety of social assistance, including child-care grant
  - 29% of population is on social grants by 2010
  - Q = Are poor households becoming increasingly dependent on government welfare system?
- Health
  - Infant mortality is decreasing,
  - But HIV/Aids continue to be a burden on the state health resources
- Infrastructure and living conditions
  - Housing; free basic water and electricity for poor households
  - Housing backlog in the urban areas

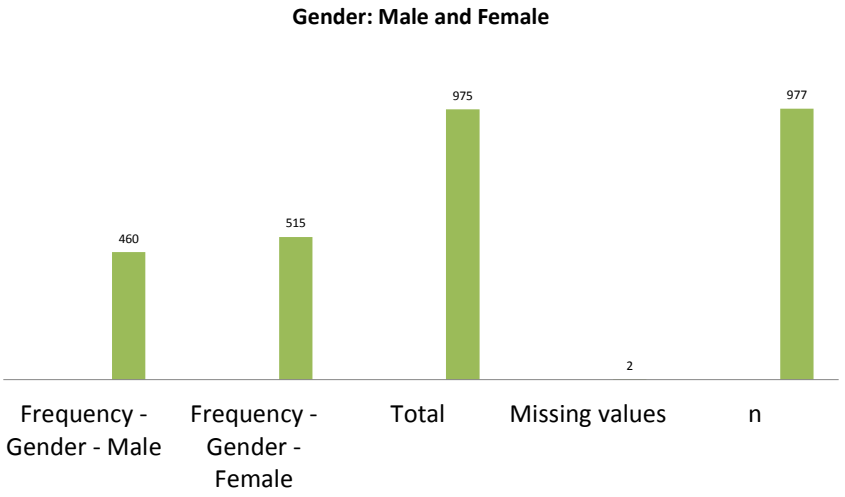
Rural v/s Urban (Wissing et al., 2013)

- SA experiencing rapid urbanization
- Rural areas remain underdeveloped
- Lower report of WB in rural areas is related to poor QOL
- Urban areas mediating/moderating factors are resource and opportunities = better infrastructure and health facilities; more employment opportunities; better education facilities; better nutrition

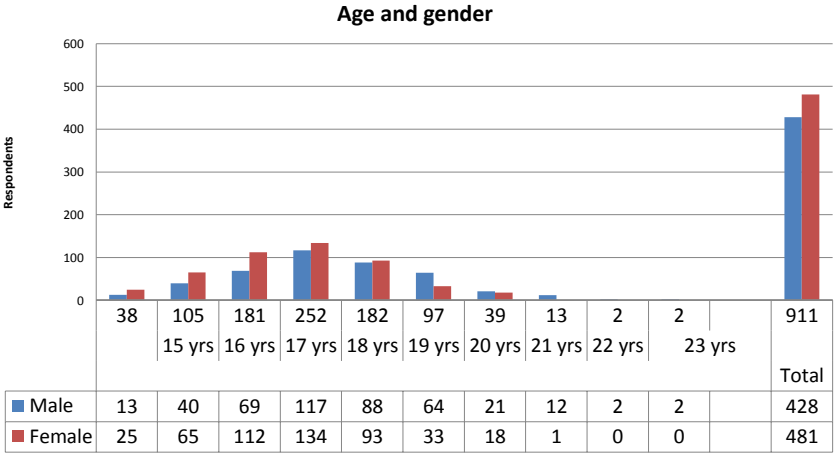
Data: Who are they?

- Gender and Age
- Socio-economic indicators
- Family characteristics
- Religion and spirituality

Gender

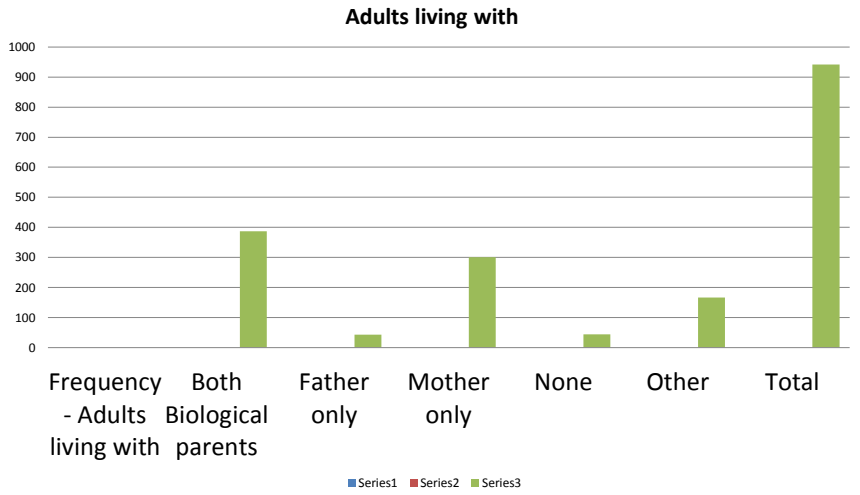


Age by gender

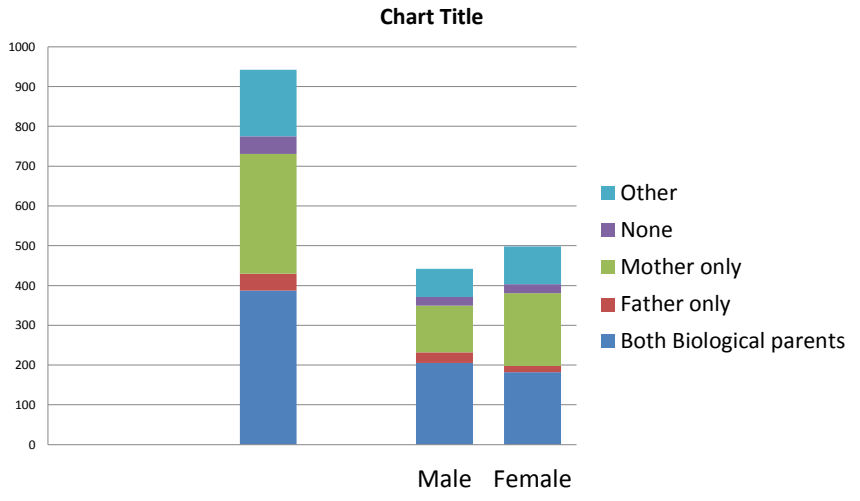


	38	105 15 yrs	181 16 yrs	252 17 yrs	182 18 yrs	97 19 yrs	39 20 yrs	13 21 yrs	2 22 yrs	2 23 yrs		911 Total
Male	13	40	69	117	88	64	21	12	2	2		428
Female	25	65	112	134	93	33	18	1	0	0		481

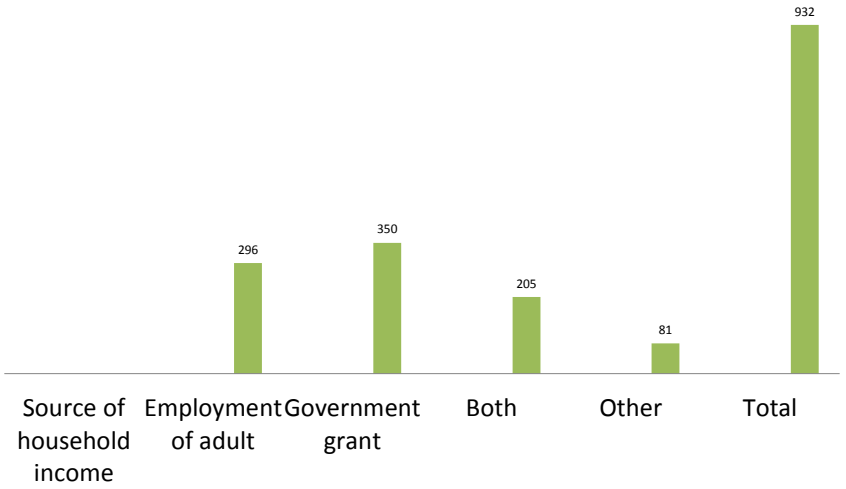
Whom of the following adults do you live with?



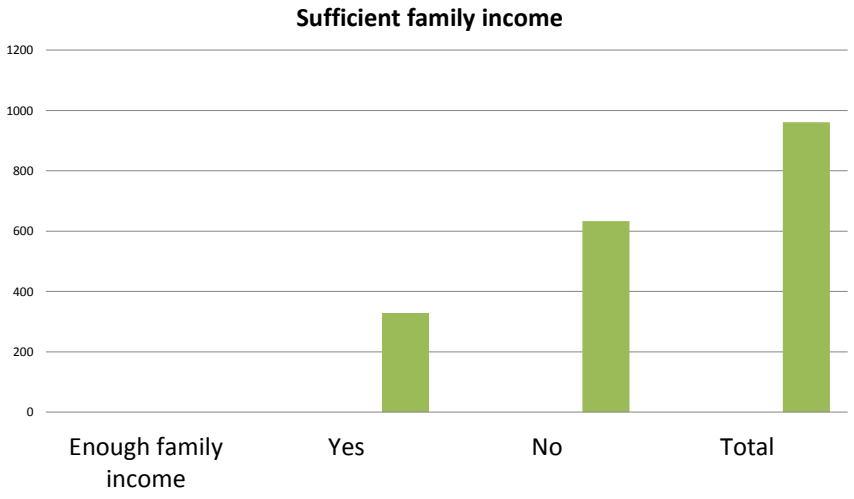
Adults living with, by gender



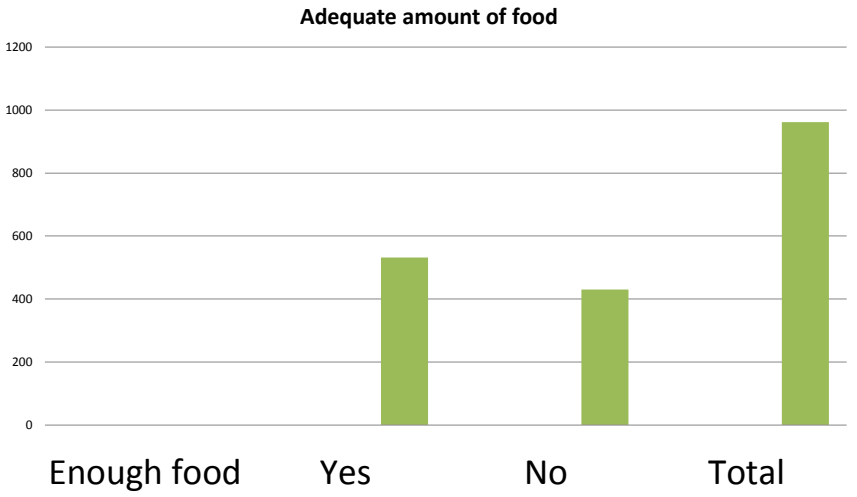
Source of household income



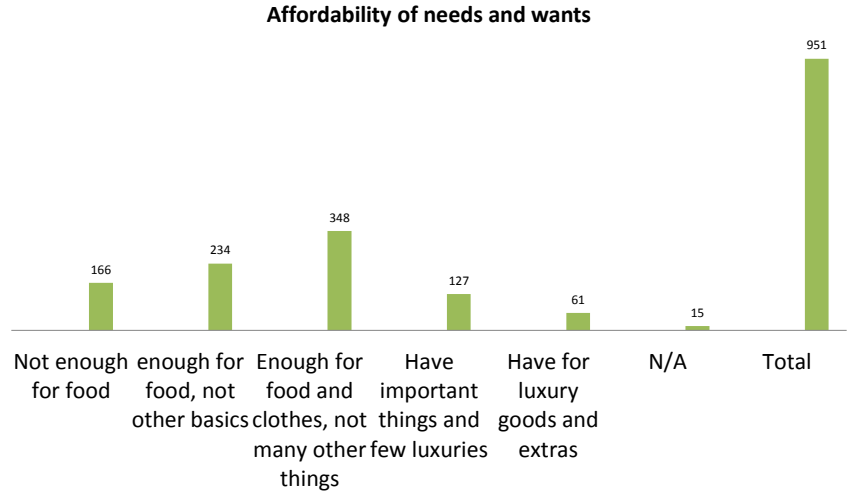
Do you feel that your household income is enough for your family needs?



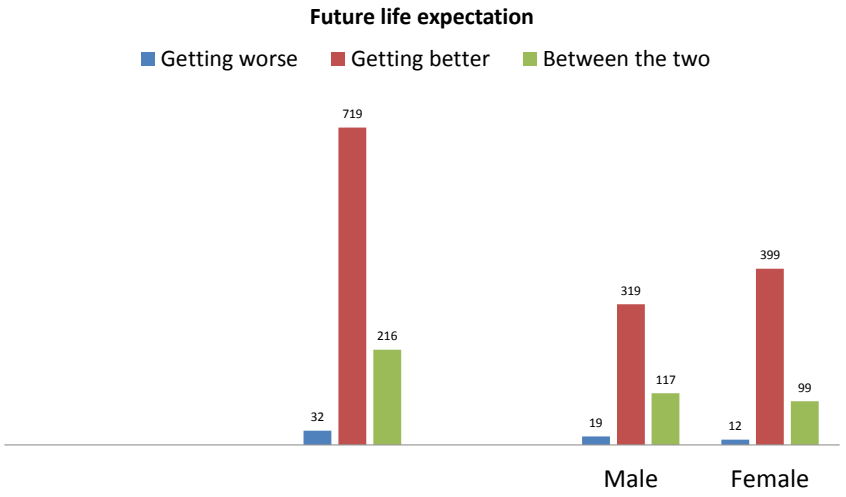
Do you feel your family always has enough food?



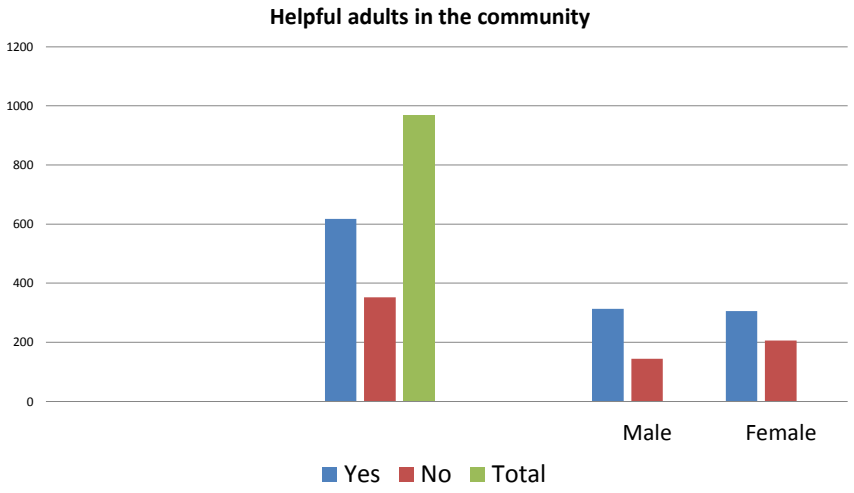
Which one of the following best describes how things are in your home?



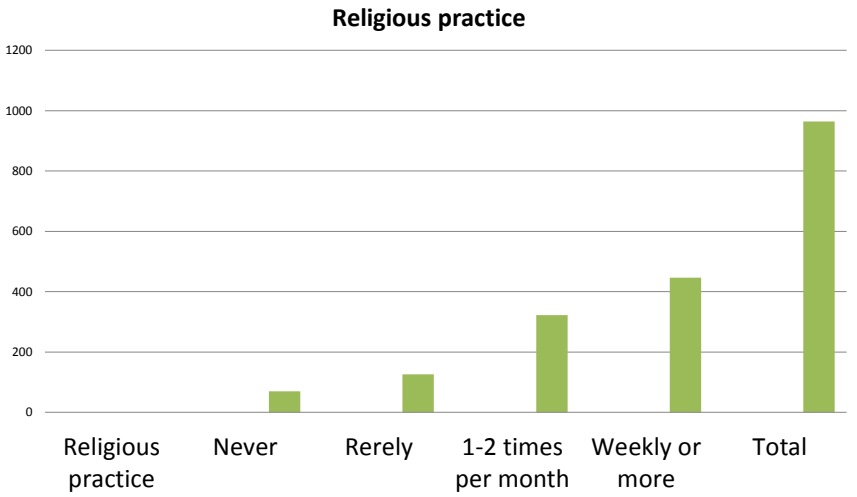
Considering how your life is now, how do you think your life will be in the future?



Do you experience adults in your community as helpful?



How often do you attend religious services/activities?



Future considerations

1. Methods :Greater sophistication and rigor
   - Multilevel Analysis (e.g. Hox, 2010)
   - Mixed Methods approaches (e.g. Creswell, & Plato Clark, 2007)

2. Context
   - The so-called "neglected" third leg of Positive Psychology (e.g. Biswas-Diener, 2011; Donaldson, Csikszentmihalyi, & Nakamura, 2011)

3. Appropriate Influence of public policy

Thank You



OPTENTIA RESEARCH PROGRAMME

Enabling optimal expression of individual, social and institutional potential