THE MANIFESTATION OF FLOURSIHING MENTAL HEALTH IN SOCIETAL BEHAVIOURS

Bachelor Thesis

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Abstract

Research in the field of positive psychology is growing, often focussing on the positive mental health state of flourishing, where a person is filled with positive emotions and is functioning well psychologically and socially. The aim of the current study was to identify daily behaviours of flourishers in a societal context, using a mixed method approach of combining qualitative and quantitative analyses. Findings were compared between flourishers who are socially functioning well and non-flourishers who are not functioning well. The coding process of written narratives of European laypersons (N = 30) revealed that societal behaviours of flourishers comprised day-to-day behaviours leading to positive feelings initiated by the four dimensions of social well-being of social acceptance, social contribution, social integration and social coherence, explained by Keyes (1998). However, behaviours relating to the fifth dimension of social actualisation were not found. Differences in descriptions of the behavioural manifestation of flourishing in life between flourishers who are socially functioning well and non-flourishers who are not socially functioning well were not affirmed as well. Findings suggest that when the fundamental characteristics of accepting and appreciating others are given, flourishers are enabled to conduct many societal behaviours as connecting and working together with other people, helping to enhance the well-being of others and society, and exploring the operation of the social world by getting to know new communities and cultures. Activating such behaviours appears to create a promising route to increase well-being and could be integrated into social support interventions. More practical research is needed in different cultural communities to identify pathways for increasing flourishing among the world population.

Keywords: Positive psychology, Flourishing, Social well-being, Societal behaviours, Social support interventions

Table of Contents

Introduction

In the past two decades, research in the field of positive psychology is growing, focusing on the examination of well-being, happiness, quality of life, strengths and resources (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Research led to the recognition of a high mental health state referred to as 'flourishing', which can be reached if the following conditions are met: high levels of well-being are present, a person is filled with positive emotions and is functioning well psychologically and socially (Keyes, 2002).

Emotional well-being is determined by satisfaction with life, involving positive affectious feelings, such as happiness or cheerfulness (Keyes, 2002; Keyes & Simoes 2012). Functional well-being comprises psychological and social well-being. On the psychological level, Ryff (1989) discovered six dimensions contributing to positive functioning in life: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, personal growth, purpose in life, environmental mastery and autonomy. Social functioning in life can be assessed using a five-factor structure of Keyes (1998), referring to social coherence, social actualisation, social integration, social acceptance, and social contribution. Accordingly, if the emotional and functional (consisting of psychological and social) well-being of an individual is assessed as high, the term flourishing is used (Schotanus-Dijkstra et al., 2016; Keyes, 2002; Keyes & Simoes 2012).

The Importance of Flourishing

The mental health state of flourishing is of high importance since it positively affects the mental, as well as physical health of an individual. As research has shown, more resilience concerning vulnerabilities and life-challenges is present in flourishers (Schotanus-Dijkstra et al., 2016). Positive affect, as experienced during flourishing, was found to widen the scope of attention, broaden behavioural repertoires and increase intuition and creativity (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005). A negative correlation was found concerning flourishing and mental illness,

indicating that flourishing persons have a reduced risk of developing mental illnesses (Keyes & Simoes, 2012). Moreover, all-cause mortality decreases if the mental health state of flourishing is present, as shown by a study of Keyes and Simoes (2012). Accordingly, mental and physical illnesses can be prevented by stimulating a flourishing mental health state. Positive psychology interventions promoting flourishing were found to have a large effect on depression and anxiety, decreasing symptom severity (Hendriks et al., 2018; Schotanus-Dijkstra et al., 2018). It appears that prevalence rates of flourishers differ between countries and do not classify the majority of the population, as shown by studies from the last two decades: 17% in the United States (Keyes, 2002), 20% in South Africa (Keyes et al., 2008) and 37% in the Netherlands (Schotanus-Dijkstra et al., 2016). To foster positive mental and physical health states, the proportion of flourishing among the general population can be increased.

For enhancing flourishing in life, associated factors are of interest. Schotanus-Dijkstra et al. (2016) found that the factors of positive life events and social support appear to be significantly correlated with flourishing. However, the social well-being scale is often not considered as much as the emotional and psychological well-being scale when it comes to the assessment of flourishing (Keyes, 2009). This is also reflected regarding former research which focussed more on emotional well-being (Biswas-Diener et al. 2010; Fredrickson, 2001; Fredrickson & Losada, 2005) and psychological well-being (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Ryff & Singer, 2008), whereas research on social well-being and flourishing is scarce. Nonetheless, social well-being appears to be of high importance for flourishing, as it strengthens mastering social challenges and tasks (Keyes, 1998). As Cohen (2004) explains, social networks enhance stress-buffering and positive psychological states, such as identity and self-worth. To fill this gap in research, the current study focuses on social well-being and its manifestation during flourishing in life.

Social Well-Being

Mental health is not only fundamental to our individual, but also collective ability as humans to think and interact with each other (World Health Organization [WHO], 2018). Since individuals are embedded in social structures and communities, mental health can only be protected and restored through an interplay of individuals, communities and societies throughout the world (Keyes, 1998; WHO, 2018). Based on that, the concept of social well-being appears to be of high value, since humans interact daily on a social basis, contributing intensively to one's well-being. The WHO (2004) states that probably the most important determinant of our health is the extent and way we organise our society and interact within communities, involving care, trust and association with others. To use the significant benefits of social support and integration, mental health can be improved using social support interventions, such as fostering promising social relationships (Cohen, 2004; Hendriks et al., 2018).

To understand how to reach positive effects on mental health through social life, the five-factor theory of social well-being by Keyes (1998) can be used, as it was confirmed to be the best fitting model (Keyes & Shapiro, 2004). Generally, "social well-being is the appraisal of one's circumstance and functioning in society" (Keyes, 1998, p. 122), defining an individual's evaluation of the quality of their relationships with people and communities. The first dimension is social integration, focussing on the quality of an individuals' relation to society and community and whether a feeling of belongingness exists. Secondly, social acceptance is explained by trusting other people, a belief that others are capable of kindness and thinking that others can be industrious. Feeling comfortable with others and holding favourable views of human nature are part of high social acceptance. Further, the evaluation of one's social value forms the dimension of social contribution. This includes the feeling of being an efficient member of society and taking responsibility for contributions to commonwealth. Moreover, social actualisation involves recognising society's potential and its capacity of

realisation through institutions and citizens, focussing on social growth. Lastly, meaningfulness of life, a concern for knowing about the world, as well as the perception of the quality, organisation, and operation of the social world, is part of the dimension of social coherence. Thus, the five dimensions of social integration, social acceptance, social contribution, social actualisation and social coherence together determine an individual's social well-being.

Since these scales may contribute to flourishing mental health, it is of interest whether laypeople consider social well-being as important part of flourishing in life, manifesting in attitudes and behaviours in line with the described scales. However, the five dimensions solely indicate attitudes and reflecting feelings towards society, whereas research on observable behaviour is missing. Based on that, it would be of interest how a flourishing person behaves in relation to society. To make the definition of social well-being and its facets more concrete, it can be examined which behavioural characteristics lead to the described feelings and attitudes reflected in the five dimensions of social well-being. Indications of such behaviours can be inferred from a study by Keyes and Shapiro (2004), summarising attitudes of flourishers concerning society in line with the five dimensions. For example, social acceptance implicates acknowledging others and social coherence involves a belief that one's daily activities are valued by a community. Examples of possible related behaviours can be found in Figure 1.

Social Integration	Social Acceptance	Social Contribution
-> engaging in group activities	-> exchanging ideas with other community members	-> volunteering for a social organisation

Social Actualisation	Social Coherence
-> engaging in work contributing to the growth of society	-> visiting courses for gaining knowledge on topics concerning the world

Figure 1. The five Dimensions of Social Well-Being and possible related Societal Behaviours.

Additionally, other behavioural sets might be of importance for laypeople which are not necessarily covered by the five described dimensions. Using narratives of such, more light can be shed on the more practical day-to-day behaviours that do fit well within social well-being.

Research Questions

The aim of the current study is to identify general day-to-day behaviours of flourishers in a societal context. Possible differences in the conduction of such behaviours based on the level of individual social functioning are of interest as well to examine whether behavioural patterns of flourishers differ in relation to the level of importance assigned to social interactions. Accordingly, two research questions emerge:

(1) How does flourishing mental health manifest in societal behaviours as described in laypersons narratives of a flourishing person?

(2) How do flourishers who are socially functioning well describe societal behaviours differently compared to non-flourishers who are not socially functioning well?

With the current research, it is aimed to obtain detailed insights into which societal behaviours enhance social well-being, contributing to flourishing. It is expected that flourishers

who score high on social well-being refer more often to societal behaviours they or others conduct when flourishing in life than non-flourishers who score low on social well-being, due to more importance assigned to social relations.

Methods

Study Design

A mixed method design was used. The reported qualitative data is part of a narrative study, gathered through open-ended narratives written online. Quantitative data was considered in ways of a pre-test, where a questionnaire needed to be filled in for the use of dividing respondents into flourishers who are socially functioning well and non-flourishers who are not socially functioning well. In addition, narratives were analysed with respect to differences between those groups. The data was collected within a period of three weeks in April 2019.

Participants

A convenience sampling strategy was applied to recruit participants. Participants were reached through several online platforms, such as WhatsApp, and verbally in the circle of acquaintances of the researchers. Inclusion criteria comprised being at least 18 years old, European citizen and fluent in writing English or German. Agreement of the Ethical Committee of the University of Twente was obtained.

In total, narratives of 129 people were obtained, who also filled in the baseline survey. Data of 30 respondents was used based on selection criteria of including the data of 15 flourishers who scored high on social well-being and 15 non-flourishers who scored low on social well-being. The criteria of flourishing versus non-flourishing and high versus low scores on social well-being were assessed using the Mental Health Continuum Short Form (MHC-SF)

(Keyes, 2009) as baseline measurement (pre-test), which was offered via the online questionnaire platform Qualtrics. For categorising flourishing versus non-flourishing, cut-off values as proposed by Keyes were used (Keyes et al., 2008). Concerning social well-being, an example item is the following: 'During the past month, how often did you feel that you had warm and trusting relationships with others?' (Keyes et al., 2008). High social well-being scores were obtained when at least two of the five social well-being items were scored with 5 ('every day') or 4 ('almost every day'). If all five social well-being items were scored with 3 ('2 or 3 times a week') – 0 ('never') on the 6-point Likert Scale, responses were scored as low on social well-being.

A Cronbach's Alpha of .94 was found at baseline, indicating excellent reliability. Demographic characteristics of the 30 participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographical Comparison of Participants with respect to their group affiliation. Group 1 involved flourishers scoring high on social well-being and Group 2 involved non-flourishers scoring low on social well-being.

	Flourishers who are socially functioning well (N = 15)	Non-Flourishers who are not socially functioning well (N = 15)
Age		
Age Range	20 – 64	18 – 54
M (SD)	39.20 (17.46)	30.80 (12.16)
Gender, n (%)		
Female	6 (40)	9 (60)
Male	9 (60)	6 (40)
Education, n (%)		
Higher Education	8 (53.3)	6 (40.0)
Lower Education	7 (46.7)	9 (60.0)

Age of the 30 participants ranged from 18 to 64, where the mean age was 35 (SD = 15.75). The two groups did not differ significantly on any of the demographic variables of age

[F(529.2, 29) = 2.25, p = .145], gender [$X^2(1)$ = 1.2, p = .273] and education [$X^2(1)$ = .54, p = .464].

Qualitative Measurements

Qualitative data was gathered using narratives of respondents, who were asked to answer open-ended questions in writing using 150 to 600 words per question. The questions were offered via the online platform Qualtrics, with a time interval of one week after baseline. The following qualitative questions were used:

(1) Flourishing means that you function optimally, as an individual and in relation to others and society. Please describe one or more situations wherein you flourish. What do you do? What do you feel? What do you think?

(2) Think about a person who you believe is representative for a person who is flourishing. Please describe this person. What makes you believe that this person is flourishing? How does this person act? What does he/she feel or think?

For both questions, it was further instructed to describe more in detail how flourishers are functioning as a person, in relation to others and/or in relation to society.

Coding. For the coding process, data was anonymised before analysing the narratives. A thematic content analytic approach was employed using a manual coding process with help of the programme ATLAS.ti 8.0. Similar categories of behaviours in social interactions referred to in the laypersons' narratives were examined and clustered. A code consisted of a fragment found in the narratives, which could be a few words, one sentence or a few sentences. One fragment was used to be assigned to one or more (sub-)codes. This coding strategy was chosen, as the narratives contained diverse answers, often combining various topics in relation to flourishing.

First, narratives were sorted based on their correspondence to the two groups of flourishers who are socially functioning well and non-flourishers who are not socially functioning well. When the narratives were read for the first time, a deductive approach was used to identify behaviours relating to the five dimensions of social well-being by Keyes (1998). To translate these into codes, the definition of Keyes, as well as insights concerning described societal behaviours in the narratives were used. It was recognised that no societal behaviours were described that related to the dimension of *social actualisation*. Consequently, this code was deleted. An inductive approach was used to gather more specific information on the remaining four codes, establishing sub-codes, and other societal behaviours which are not covered by the five dimensions. Reading the narratives for a second time, all fragments were assigned to (sub-)codes based on the four social well-being dimensions, as no deviating societal behaviours were described. To check on the codes and whether described societal behaviours were missed, the narratives were read again. During the third reading process, the allocation of some fragments needed to be adjusted concerning their fit to more than one sub-code.

According to the established coding scheme (Table 2), all narratives were coded by one researcher. A second researcher coded the narratives using the main codes to check on the interrater reliability. Cohen's *kappa* was adequate to sufficient, varying between 0.62 for the codes of *social integration* and *social coherence* to 0.78 for *social contribution*.

Table 2. Coding Scheme comprising Codes, Definitions, Example Quotes and Sub-Codes according to Narratives of the current Study.

Code	Definition	Example Quote
(1) Social Acceptance	Liaising with others and exchanging understanding and appreciation	"The way he functions as a person towards other is always in an honesty and positive way which it will makes you feel better" (ID P3)
1.1 Expressing acceptance and appreciation of others	Approaching others in a respectful, accepting and valuing manner	"They treat each individual that they encounter with respect and friendliness" (ID R2)
1.2 Establishing empathic contact	Establishing connections to others by sharing values and understanding each other	"She can relate to all sorts of people, which makes it easy for her to flourish in different environments and settings" (ID R1)
1.3 Trusting Others	Sharing personal thoughts, feelings and experiences with others	"I flourish when I am around friends and family, people I can trust and am confident in myself" (ID R2)
(2) Social Contribution	Engaging in activities contributing to the well-being of others and society	"She often helps disadvantaged people in unconventional ways, for example she takes nearly dying persons in and cares for them until the end" (ID P8)
2.1 Helping others	Good deeds that help others emotionally, physically or socially	"I think that this person is happy if she can help other people and for example organises social projects in a team." (ID P7)
2.2 Working for commonwealth	Engaging in volunteering work or activities that contribute to the well-being of society	"Moreover, he works in an 'Elderly-Café'. In contrast to his rather reserved character traits, he was completely flourishing in this domain." (ID R5)

(3) Social Integration	Engaging in activities in relation to or cooperation with people from a community or society	"Another situation in which I have the feeling to flourish is when I spend time with people that are important to me. I am noticing then that I feel more self-confident and connected to the world, I then have a place in the world/society." (ID P6)
3.1 Activities shared with others	Spending time with others while engaging in the same activity together	"What gives me much joy as well, is that I am singing together with friends in a choir" (ID R17)
3.2 Teamwork	Completing tasks together for reaching a shared goal and strengthening each other	"I am describing everyone who is in a team. These persons behave on and off the field like a unit and strengthen each other." (ID P11)
3.3 Conversations with people from a social network	Talking to people from a community to which one belongs	"[…] as soon as I leave the front door, neighbours, acquaintances or other people cross my path, one approaches them to engage in a short, friendly conversation […]" (ID P15)

(4) Social Coherence	Engaging in widening one's knowledge about the world and in ensuring the quality of the social world	"I also flourish when I get new insights. Insights into new cultures, countries, people. Knowledge that broadens my horizon and completes my puzzle of the world." (1015)
4.1 Exploring unknown cultures and communities	Travelling to foreign countries or exchanging traditions with people from other cultures	"Travelling and working in new places and amongst new cultures." (ID P4)
4.2 Engaging in insightful conversations or discussions	Talking to others about new topics and being interested in other's viewpoints	"When they enlighten me with important knowledge I did not possess before, when I am able to share information with them" (ID P2)

Statistical Analyses

To examine whether significant differences in descriptions of societal behaviours (the coding scheme) existed between the two groups, an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted using the program IBM SPSS Statistics 24. A significance level of .05 was applied.

Results

The 30 chosen narratives were analysed with respect to contents relating to the established codes and sub-codes. Generally, descriptions of societal behaviours of flourishers were found in all 30 narratives, most frequently referring to *social acceptance*, followed by *social contribution*, *social integration* and *social coherence* (N = 128). More detailed insights into the codes and their frequencies in the narratives can be found in Table 3, sorted by their prevalence in the descriptions by laypersons. For a better overview, IDs were assigned to the narratives, where narratives of group 1 are indicated by Participants (P) 1 – 15 and narratives of group 2 by Respondents (R) 1 – 15.

Table 3. Frequencies and ANOVA test results of the number of allocated fragments about social well-being aspects (N = 128) of 30 participants who wrote narratives about flourishing.

Code	Flourishers who are socially functioning well n (%)	Non-Flourishers who are not socially functioning well n (%)	p
Social Acceptance	**26 (20.25)**	**20 (15.75)**	**.836**
Expressing acceptance and appreciation of others	13 (10)	8 (6.25)	
Establishing empathic contact	8 (6.25)	9 (7)	
Trusting others	5 (4)	3 (2.5)	
Social Contribution	**20 (15.5)**	**16 (12.5)**	**.877**
Helping others	16 (12.5)	10 (8)	
Working for commonwealth	4 (3)	6 (4.5)	
Social Integration	**17 (13.25)**	**13 (10.25)**	**.853**
Activities shared with others	8 (6.25)	8 (6.25)	

Teamwork	7 (5.5)	1 (1)	
Conversations with people from a social network	2 (1.5)	4 (3)	
Social Coherence	**11 (8.5)**	**5 (4)**	**.623**
Engaging in insightful conversations or discussions	7 (5.5)	2 (1.5)	
Exploring unknown cultures and communities	4 (3)	3 (2.5)	
Total	**74 (58)**	**54 (42)**	.829

Description of Societal Behaviours

The most popular code in the narratives was *social acceptance*, which was referred to 46 times (36%) in total. Appreciating the qualities of other people and feeling comfortable with others (Keyes, 1998), manifests in behaviours such as treating others with respect and friendliness (ID R2). In accordance, *expressing acceptation and appreciation of others* appears to be of main importance for measuring societal behaviours of flourishers, as it was mentioned most frequently (16.25%). In that domain, described behaviours were encountering everyone with respect and in a positive manner, showing interest for others, accepting other's values and opinions, being thankful for other's deeds or presence, sharing pleasures with others and not trying to convert others or their values by letting them live the way they wish to. The latter gets especially visible in the following quotes: "They live in a way that aligns with their morals but don't confront others about their lack of morals or become disheartened by this" (ID R2); "He can behave like this, because he does not need to impose his philosophy of life on others. He lives according to the motto: ‚Live and let live'!" (ID R15).

Moreover, *establishing empathic contact* (13.25%) can significantly contribute to flourishing, as it enables a person to behave freely and sociable in different contexts. Generally, it appears to be of importance to establish new contacts in an open-minded manner, as well as deep connections sharing values and offering understanding for each other, e.g.: "In addition, he masters to handle different kinds of people and to engage in good conversations, where it does not matter whether it is some crass bank clerk or a priest" (ID R4). Lastly, *trusting others* occurred in different contexts, such as family, friends or colleagues at work. Specific behaviours where trust is expressed might be engaging in personal conversations where someone can fully confide in the other and share deep feelings, e.g. "I experience flourishing, when I engage in intense conversations with my two sons, both in the mid of their twenties, concerning how we feel, what is important for us in life and how we want or can reach this. There, we don't restrain

the most painful feelings which load on us" (ID P15). Working together with people that can be trusted evoked positive feelings as well: "I have this feeling sometimes at my workplace, especially when I work together with trusted persons. We know each other already for some time and get on well. The work is running smoothly, and we interact without stumbling blocks" (ID R1). Thus, the code of *social acceptance* manifests in different ways, where the empathic and trustful contact to other people is of high importance, as well as expressing acceptation and sharing values and happiness with others. Contributing to the mental health state of flourishing, deep conversations, trustful interactions and an open and respectful networking were thus found to be of high value.

  Helping others which belongs to the dimension of *social contribution*, was most frequently used as subcategory (20.5%). It defines helping behaviour which is assumed to be valued by other members of society (Keyes, 1998). Societal behaviours in that domain were described focussing on helping others in different ways and situations without expecting something in return: "They do not only help when the others suffer" (ID P1); "I think that this person is happy if she can help other people and for example organises social projects in a team." (ID P7). This behaviour does not only focus on acquaintances but every individual one encounters. Further behaviours mentioned were making others happy through good deeds, such as preparing a good dinner for friends or caring for others physically or by offering them attentive listening and understanding: "I am noticing that in such situations I possess the emotional strength to assist others concerning critical topics or just listening" (ID R5). *Social contribution* appears to be of high value for flourishing in general, since the second sub-code of *working for commonwealth* was also used regularly (7.5%). Being socially committed and engaging in voluntary or social work are the main activities executed by flourishing persons when it comes to contributing to commonwealth. In addition, working for donations and engaging in demonstrations were mentioned as well, heightening the belief that one is a vital member of society contributing to the well-being of people: "Concerning the community, I

flourish when I follow a charitable goal. Let it be a demonstration against unethical things or a run for donations" (ID R5).

Another category that was often referred to is *activities shared with others* (12.5%) as part of *social integration*. The feeling of belonging to a community appears to be of importance for social well-being (Keyes, 1998), which is heightened by engaging in activities together, such as travelling, playing board games or singing in a choir. By that, passions are shared and the feeling of having a good sense of community is increased: "When I am having a good community with friends or colleagues and I am having fun at jointly activities, I am happy. That can be projects, skiing, sailing, class outings, celebrations, etc." (ID R13). The motivation to engage in activities with others generally seems to be higher when a flourishing mental health state is present: "I would say that I am functioning better in such situations, especially in relation to others, as my mood is better then and I would rather meet other people and go out" (ID R4).

The four remaining sub-codes are *teamwork* and *conversations with people from a social network* relating to *social integration*, as well as *engaging in insightful conversations and discussions* and *exploring unknown cultures and communities* relating to *social coherence*. The code of *teamwork* needs to be differentiated from *activities shared with others*, as behaviours relating to *teamwork* rather focus on reaching a goal together while strengthening each other, instead of spending time together on an activity for fun. Concerning *teamwork*, behaviours contributing to flourishing were described as agreeing on goals together, distributing tasks, integrating different ideas, supporting each other, being part of a team and can occur in several contexts, such as at work, with friends or in a sports team. Of value are fluent interactions, where tasks can be carried out in collaboration without problems: "That is a lot of fun, especially when things are discussed in a team, goals are agreed on and pursued together" (ID P7). Thus, teamworking adds value to the feeling of contributing something important to a common goal in a community, as well as in general to a feeling of belongingness. This feeling is also strengthened by *engaging in conversations with people from a social*

network, such as greeting and talking to neighbours, acquaintances, or colleagues. Also, casual talks with friends or others from a social group and deep talks with old friends help to feel connected and integrated. Lastly, *social coherence* manifests in societal behaviours focussing on learning something new about the world, other cultures, communities or interrelations. This can occur by travelling, getting to know new lifestyles, people or traditions and learning about other's experiences and ways of thinking, obtaining new knowledge, reflecting on or changing viewpoints by asking for other's opinions and discussing controversial topics to learn more about society. One participant described this behaviour very detailed: "Discussions concerning controversial topics or sometimes also banal things help to reveal new perspectives. Other's opinions often help to overcome narrow-mindedness and one-sided viewpoints: "You can only flourish if you listen to other's opinions, compromise and change viewpoints. I already had often discussions or conversations where I noticed in the end that I was wrong in the beginning or had a one-sided point of view. Most things I regard today more logically and with more consideration than a few years ago, where I sensed a strong development into the positive and that just due to exchanging perspectives with friends, family and strangers" (ID P5). Based on that and on engaging in activities like visiting other cultures, a feeling of being better able to make sense of, organise and operate in the social word emerges.

Lastly, to examine differences in frequencies of mentioning the codes between the two groups, an ANOVA was conducted. Test results demonstrated no significant differences for the four codes of *social acceptance* [$F(1.63, 29) = .043, p = .836$], *social contribution* [$F(.533, 29) = .024, p = .877$], *social integration* [$F(.533, 29) = .035 , p = .853$] and *social coherence* [$F(1.2, 29) = 0.247, p = .623$], rejecting the assumption of existing differences. This indicates that societal behaviours appear to be of similar importance for flourishers who are socially functioning well and non-flourishers who are not socially functioning well when experiencing and observing the state of flourishing.

Overview of Results

In conclusion, societal behaviours of flourishers described by laypersons often focussed on helping others in ways of caring for them by listening, offering emotional support or suggesting solutions to problems, as well as accepting and appreciating others by showing respect, interest and thankfulness. Engaging in casual contacts and deep connections contributes to flourishing, where open-mindedness, understanding and trust is shared with others. Further, it appears that flourishers are more inclined to engage in activities with others, work in a team in a supportive manner and talk to many people, such as neighbours or colleagues. Engaging in social work for contributing something to commonwealth, as well as learning more about other cultures and communities through travelling or insightful conversations are societal behaviours executed by flourishers as well.

Regarding the codes and their behavioural manifestations from a helicopter point of view, societal behaviours of the four main codes seem to be interrelated. For example, travelling with friends, as affiliated with *social integration*, might implicate exploring new cultures while travelling, as affiliated with *social coherence*. In that way, certain societal behaviours may present a precondition for other societal behaviours, such as establishing empathic contact (*social acceptance*) and engaging in activities with others (*social integration*) which would not be possible without established contact and interest in sharing pleasures with others. An overview on the most common societal behaviours and their code affiliation is presented in Figure 2, including indications of possible interrelations of the categories.
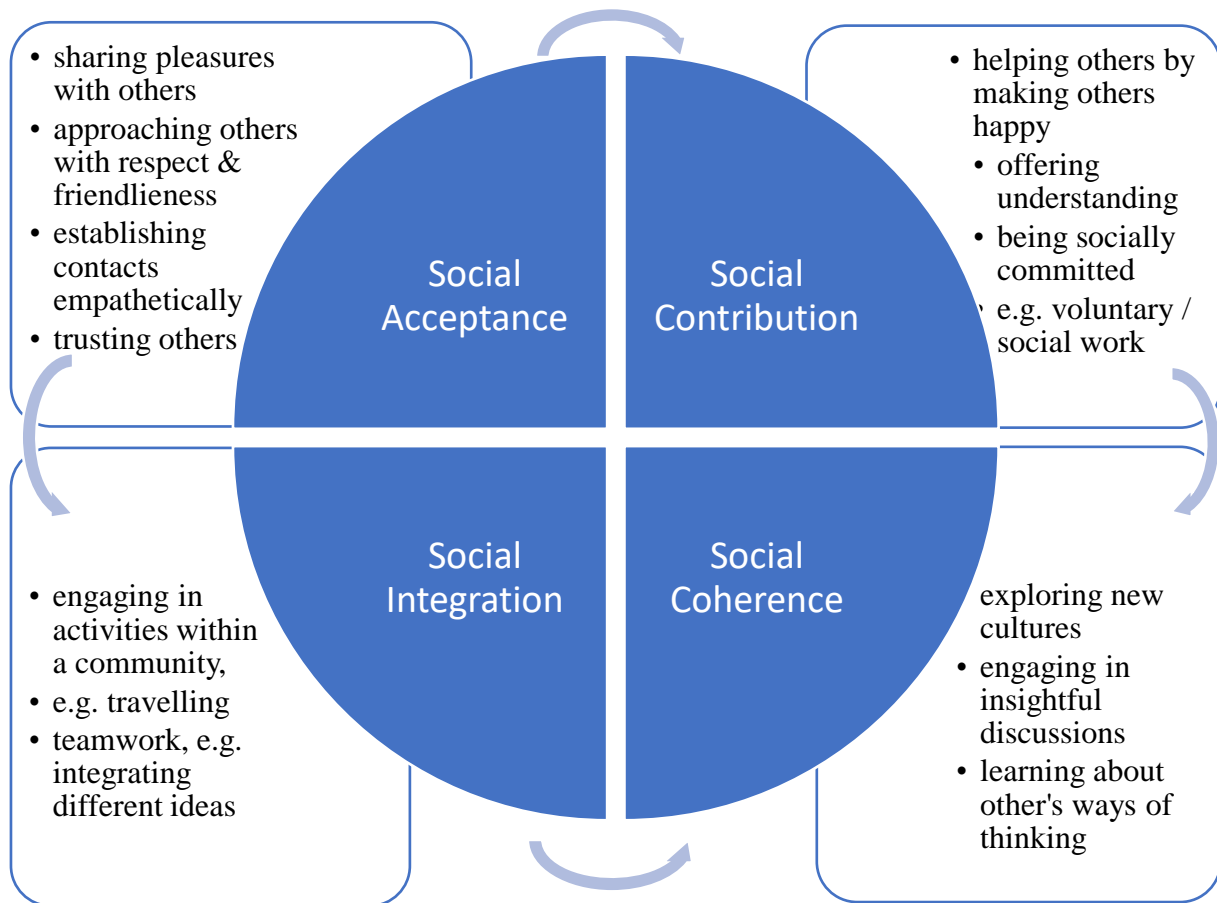
Figure 2. Societal behaviours described by laypersons aligning with four dimensions of social well-being. Possible interrelations are indicated by arrows.

Discussion

The aim of the current study was to gain insights into how flourishers are behaving in a societal context and whether differences exist in the descriptions of such behaviours with respect to an individual's level of social functioning. Analyses of the narratives revealed that flourishing persons regularly interact with their social environment in several contexts manifesting in behaviours, such as approaching others respectfully and trusting others (*social acceptance*), helping behaviours for individuals or commonwealth (*social contribution*), sharing activities, conversations and work with others (*social integration*), and engaging in insightful conversations with people from other communities and exploring their cultures (*social*

coherence). No significant differences in descriptions of societal behaviours between flourishers who are socially functioning well and non-flourishers who are not socially functioning well were found. This indicates that the level of social well-being has no influence on the assigned importance to conduct societal behaviours for flourishing in life.

Main Findings in the Light of Former Research

As all narratives contained descriptions of flourishers conducting societal behaviours, it was confirmed that these are of high importance for flourishing. This aligns with the explanation of the WHO (2004) that the most important determinant of our health appears to be the extent and way of interaction with others, in ways of trusting others and caring for a community, as well as other studies that found social relations significantly accounting for happiness (Cicognani et al., 2006; Delle Fave, Brdar, Freire, Vella-Brodrick, & Wissing, 2011; Demir & Weitekamp, 2007). As recognised by Henderson, Knight and Richardson (2013), the conduction of behaviours relating to emotional and functional well-being predict flourishing, where the current study adds value by identifying specific daily behaviours in a societal context. In total, 128 codes were found, defining behaviours in line with *social acceptance* (36%), *social contribution* (28%), *social integration* (23.5%) and *social coherence* (12.5%). Solely, the dimension of social actualisation (Keyes, 1998) was not found to manifest in societal behaviours of flourishers. This does not necessarily mean that *social actualisation* is not important for flourishers, as it might be rather expressed in emotional states, such as a hope about the condition and future of society, as explained by Keyes and Shapiro (2004). They also found that social actualisation is highest in early midlife (45 – 54) and lowest in the remaining ages. Accordingly, the percentage of such participants of the current sample might have been too low to obtain deeper insights into the behavioural manifestation of *social actualisation*.

Thus, future research is needed to focus on the dimension of *social actualisation* and its' behavioural manifestation, using a target group of persons in this age range.

Cohen (2004) explained that social support and social integration are especially beneficial for mental health, which was confirmed by the great presence of described societal behaviours conducted by flourishers that relate to the dimensions of *social acceptance*, *social contribution* and *social integration*.

The current findings add content to the inference from the study of Keyes and Shapiro (2004) that acknowledging others contributes to *social acceptance*, which appears to set a basis for societal behaviours of flourishers high on social well-being in general. This is explained by the fact that *social acceptance* (liaising with others and exchanging understanding and appreciation) was the most prominent code during the content analysis and appears to relate to several behaviours of other categories. Rollero and De Piccoli (2012) found that interpersonal contact and being emotionally involved, as related to *social acceptance*, fosters feelings of belongingness (*social integration*). This is also reflected in described behaviours of approaching others with respect and friendliness, which may enable persons to successfully engage in teamwork (*social integration*) or kind acts of helping others (*social contribution*). In addition, studies that examined the link between personality traits and flourishing found that agreeableness predicted positive relations with others and friendship (*social integration*), which in turn enhances well-being (Campbell, Adams, Perry, & Workman, 2002; Demir & Weitekamp, 2007; Keyes, Kendler, Myers, & Martin, 2014). This relates to the current results, as agreeableness fosters *social acceptance* (Jensen-Campbell, Adams, Perry, & Workman, 2002) and thus enhances the conduction of societal behaviours in relation to *social acceptance*. Accordingly, support is given for the finding that societal behaviours relating to *social acceptance* set a basis for the conduction of daily interpersonal behaviours of the other three dimensions.

To go on, social relations, such as neighbourhood attachment, interacting with others and friendships account for happiness to a great extent (Delle Fave et al., 2011; Demir & Weitekamp, 2007; Rollero & De Piccoli, 2010), which is reflected by the current findings of flourishers often engaging in activities, conversations and teamwork with others (*social integration*). Keyes and Shapiro (2004) found *social integration* and *social contribution* to manifest in prosocial behaviours and civic engagement among the adult population of U.S. citizens, comparable to the current findings of engaging in activities with others and social work. *Social integration* and *social contribution* appear to be intertwined, since a sense of community is positively correlated with social participation, involving civil involvement and voluntary activity (Cicognani et al., 2008). Therefore, contributing to the well-being of others and society by helping others and being socially committed (*social contribution*) links to the feeling of belongingness which is initiated by engaging in activities with others from a community (*social integration*), as found in the current study. In addition, Keyes and Shapiro (2004) described *social contribution* as comprising the belief that one's daily activities are valued by a community by conducting specific social contributions, such as *helping others*, which was the most prominent subcategory in the narratives and thus of high importance for flourishers.

In the narratives, it was recognised that a constructive interaction of individuals and communities is of importance, which is strengthened by the explanation of Keyes (1998) that a functional interplay between societies throughout the world must be established to promote social well-being. This is reflected in the dimension of *social coherence*, which appears to manifest in behaviours to understand the environment and its' interaction with social factors and connections of groups of individuals. These behaviours significantly foster an individual's social capital, which protects them from social isolation, creates social safety and enhances community life and development (WHO, 2004). As behaviours aligning with *social coherence* appear to be based on societal behaviours relating to all three other dimensions of *social*

acceptance (e.g. approaching new people respectfully), *social integration* (e.g. travelling with others) and *social contribution* (e.g. social work in new environments), activating such behaviours appears to create a promising route to increase well-being. This was also found by Henderson et al. (2013), who explained that the conduction of behaviours relating to emotional and functional well-being may define a way to effectively increase well-being and reduce psychological distress. Accordingly, identified societal behaviours of the current study can be integrated into social support interventions to promote a mentally healthy lifestyle and flourishing through fostering the conduction of behaviours concerning social acceptance, integration, contribution and coherence.

Strengths and Limitations

Strengths of the current study included the used method of asking broad, open questions to obtain detailed information through narratives. As the questions not only focused on experiences during the own mental health state of flourishing but also of other persons, it was no pre-condition to have personal experiences with flourishing in life. This offered the opportunity to also gain insights into such behaviours from an objective point of view without being influenced by positive (maybe even euphoric) emotions due to the current experience of flourishing. Written narratives offered insights into practical day-to-day behaviours directly from the experiences of laypeople, leading to realistic results.

Limitations of this study comprise that the results are not generalisable to the whole world population, as differences in the structure of societies and cultures of different continents might lead to the execution of distinct societal behaviours. In addition, the sample consisted of two groups representing extremes on the social well-being scale (high scores vs. low scores), where narratives from people who scored in the middle range of social well-being were not considered. Thus, results are not generalisable to that group of people.

Moreover, the coding process could be improved. The interrater reliability was adequate but not optimal, which might be based on an interpretive overlap between sub-codes. As more than one code was allowed to be used for one fragment, the agreement concerning the coding of such fragments might have varied. In addition, no clear cut was defined to differentiate between references to feelings and practical behaviours associated with the dimensions of social well-being, which might have led to differences in the number of coding fragments per code. The current study rather focused on the number of present observable behaviours [e.g. "We give each other feedback and we make mutual proposals for solutions" (ID P15)], whereas it was sometimes difficult to judge whether a fragment described an emotion or specific behaviour [e.g. "It feels good to accomplish something as a team." (ID P9)]. In accordance, frequencies might vary if a clear cut would be given concerning emotions or behaviours of flourishing persons in a social context.

Recommendations

Regarding future work in the context of flourishing and social well-being, more practical behaviours of flourishers could be recognised by including narratives of laypersons who score in the middle range of social well-being. In that way, it could be checked whether differences in descriptions of societal behaviours exist compared to that group of people or without reference to social well-being scores at all. Moreover, deeper insights into the presence and execution of societal behaviours of flourishers could be gained using more specific or closed questions. Thereby it could be explored for example whether certain societal behaviours are enhanced by specific circumstances or whether other factors influence the presence of such behaviours.

Further, the missing of observable societal behaviours in line with the social well-being dimension of *social actualisation* could be examined using future research that focuses solely on this sub-scale, including mainly persons aged in the midlife (45 – 54) to the sample. Lastly,

to ensure replicability, the current coding scheme could be revised in ways of setting a clear cut for (sub-)codes, clarifying their meanings. The revised coding scheme could be used in future research to recognise and differentiate societal behaviours among different sub-groups, with the aim of adapting social support interventions to clients and their societal contexts.

Practical Implications and Conclusion

The current study contributes to the growing body of research in the field of positive psychology, explaining the importance of social well-being for the mental health state of flourishing, by identifying specific and measurable societal behaviours of flourishers. This adds practical relevance to the finding that social well-being is of high value for flourishing in life, as positive psychological interventions could integrate social support to enhance identified societal day-to-day behaviours of flourishers. To reach the goal that 51% of the world population should be flourishing in 2051 (Seligman, 2011), more specific behaviours of flourishers need to be identified in relation to both emotional and functional well-being to integrate methods of stimulating these. The identified societal behaviours need to be examined more in detail, using field observations to explore possible precipitants and triggers for engaging in various social interactions. The established coding scheme can be used as compendium for daily flourishing activities in a societal context, whereas further research needs to confirm its' structure and sub-categories. Additionally, studies are needed that focus on cultural differences among the world population, taking diverging structures of societies and policies into consideration. Based on that, positive psychological interventions can be tailored to different communities and behavioural patterns of interacting within society, to foster mental well-being.

To conclude, the findings of the current study illustrate that a heterogenous group has similar experiences with societal behaviours as important part of flourishing in life. When the

fundamental characteristics of accepting, appreciating and trusting other people are given, flourishers are enabled to conduct many societal behaviours as connecting and working together with other people, helping to enhance the well-being of others and society, and exploring the operation of the social world by getting to know new communities and cultures. Integrating such behaviours into treatment goals, a significant contribution to mental health promotion can be reached, increasing the proportion of flourishing in life among laypersons. To practically use the identified behaviours for social support interventions, more research is needed to confirm the findings of the current study and to set them into a cultural context to widen their generalisability and applicability.

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