

**A qualitative study on flourishing women from different ethnic background
in the Netherlands: an in-depth interview study.**

A Research Thesis

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Abstract

Background. Flourishing has been defined as having high levels of both hedonic and eudemonic well-being. Hedonic well-being covers emotional well-being and Eudemonic well-being covers the social and psychological well-being. Flourishing shows its importance as it increases longevity, is positively associated with good health outcomes, improves recovery from illness and supports ageing well. Prior research however shows that it is yet unknown how ethnic minority cultures flourish.

Aim. This study aims to explore the thoughts on what women from four ethnic cultural backgrounds find important for their flourishing in the Netherlands.

Methods. Using a qualitative in-depth semi-structured interview study design, this study was conducted in the Netherlands among a sample of four varying ethnic cultures: Brazil, Kosovo, Somali and Yemen (N=4). Participants had to be at least 18 years old, able to speak either Dutch or English and the data was content analysed.

Results. This study found that there were five main categories found on how women from ethnic cultures flourish. The most prominent topic contributing to flourishing was family, which was explained as a core element in all cultures. Other main topics were community, which was described as belonging to a community, helping others and food. The third main topic was religion, where Islam and Allah were major elements. Then self-care followed, which was explained as me-time and reflecting on life. Lastly the topic purpose in life followed, which was explained as having goals and was often inspired by negative events.

Conclusion. Findings from this study enrich our knowledge on how flourishing can be versatile for ethnic cultures and shows how diverse ethnic backgrounds can offer diverse perspectives and meaning on how to flourish. The findings of this study do not seem to be completely in line with previous research on flourishing, as for instance research by Keyes on ingredients associated with flourishing does not seem to integrate the importance of food for social well-being. Therefore this study suggests that more qualitative research on flourishing among varying cultures is necessary to determine a more broad perspective on flourishing.

Keywords: cultural psychology, positive psychology, qualitative research, flourishing, women

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A qualitative study on flourishing of women from different ethnic background in the Netherlands

For decades the focus of mental health research has been on prevention and treatment of mental disorders such as anxiety. A growing body of research however shows that flourishing seems to be good for individuals. Cross-sectional, longitudinal and experimental studies have also shown that high levels of well-being is associated with effective learning and social behaviour (Diener et al. 2010a; Huppert 2009b; Lyubomirsky et al. 2005). Also, some longitudinal studies demonstrated that flourishing mental health was strongly related to reduced risk of depressive disorders, anxiety and mortality (Schotanus-Dijkstra et al., 2016; Keyes, 2007; Peter, Roberts & Dengate, 2011).

As flourishing seems important, views on flourishing can be multifaceted. Western societies seem to become more of a melting pot. For instance the Dutch society, which consists of diverse groups of individuals with different nationalities and ethnic backgrounds. It may be that individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds have different views on what they find important in life. This study is interested in the views of diverse ethnic backgrounds on flourishing. Therefore this current study will explore how women from diverse ethnic backgrounds flourish in a western world country.

Flourishing has been defined as having high levels of both hedonic and eudemonic well-being. Hedonic well-being covers emotional well-being, which generally focuses on subjective well-being, e.g. happiness and satisfaction in life (Langeland, 2014). Eudemonic well-being covers the social and psychological well-being (Keyes, 2002). Social well-being can be defined as the appraisal of one's circumstance and functioning in society (Keyes, 1998) and psychological well-being generally focuses on existential challenges of life, such as positive relations with others, purpose in life, self-acceptance and personal growth (Ryff, 1989). To be flourishing, an individual has to have at least one of the three ingredients of emotional well-being and six of the eleven ingredients of social and psychological well-being (Keyes, 2016).

Flourishing is important as it has been reported that a higher level of well-being increases longevity, is positively associated with good health outcomes, improves recovery from illness and supports ageing well (Stevenson et al., 2014). Additionally flourishers seem to be more resilient to challenges in life and have better mental and physical health than non-flourishers (Schotanus-Dijkstra et al. 2016; Bergsma et al. 2011; Diener and Seligman 2002; Huppert 2009; Kobau et al. 2011; Lyubomirsky et al. 2005b; Ryff and Singer 1998, 2008; Veenhoven 2008). A large representative nationwide study revealed that 37% of the Dutch population is flourishing (Schotanus-Dijkstra et al., 2016). Another cross-sectional study on the prevalence of psychological well-being for Tanzanian students reported high levels of positive mental health (Rugira, Nienaber & Wissing, 2014). The findings indicated that a large amount of students were flourishing (Rugira, Nienaber & Wissing, 2014). Additionally this study implicated that future research should integrate the possible role of religion and spirituality on psychological well-being (Rugira, Nienaber & Wissing, 2014).

A few studies on cultural psychology examined cultural factors and well-being. One study by Ryan and Deci (2000) proposed that relatedness, competence and autonomy are the most universal fundamental aspects for well-being and personal growth across cultures. Another cross-cultural study by Wong (2012) on American culture and Asian culture showed that cultural context determines which aspects are valued for well-being. Wong (2012) reported that Americans value achieving a prosperous life through hard work, while Asians were more likely to value salvation by being obedient to their God. Furthermore cultural differences in the perspectives of the self were addressed in this study, for example, in Western societies the self is seen more as a complete self, while in Eastern societies, the self is seen as a part of the community (Wong, 2012). This study also demonstrated the distinction between the American positive psychology and the Chinese positive psychology. One of the main findings was that Chinese culture values collectivism and social responsibility before personal happiness, while American culture values personal happiness more and individualism (Wong, 2012; Wong,

2004a). Additionally collectivism was found to be one of the main cultural beliefs that influenced flourishing for Chinese people (Wong, 2012). Also, a cross-cultural study on Human Flourishing among the United States, China, Sri Lanka, Cambodia and Mexico examined the differences between interdependent cultures and individualistic culture (Węziak-Białowska, McNeely & VanderWeele, 2019). The results showed that the interdependent cultures, i.e., China, Sri Lanka, Cambodia and Mexico, generally scored similar as Individualistic cultures, i.e., Americans, on Human Flourishing (Węziak-Białowska, McNeely & VanderWeele, 2019). However, there were clear differences found in hedonic and eudemonic well-being, on the domains happiness, life satisfaction, meaning and purpose in life (Węziak-Białowska, McNeely & VanderWeele, 2019). The differences were that participants from interdependent cultures scored higher on happiness, life satisfaction, meaning and purpose in life than Americans from individualistic cultures (Węziak-Białowska, McNeely & VanderWeele, 2019). Next to that, another cross-sectional study by Liebkind and Jasinskaja-Lahti (2000) examined the acculturation and psychological well-being among immigrant adolescents from Sovjet Union, Turkey, Somalia and Vietnam, who are now residing in Finland. One of the main findings in this study suggested that the participants' commitment to traditional family-related values and parental support supported their psychological well-being (Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000).

To date only limited studies have qualitatively evaluated well-being among diverse ethnic backgrounds. Results from an interview study among Somali women on well-being residing in Australia showed that having great relationships and belonging to a community played an important role for their well-being (McMichael & Manderson, 2014). Participants of that study mentioned that in Somali culture, social support and trust from neighbours, and clans are perceived as strong values and contribute to well-being (McMichael & Manderson, 2014). Additionally this study also showed the importance of food for well-being in Somali culture. Cooking, sharing and consuming food with others were often linked with family and social

interactions (McMichael & Manderson, 2014). Manderson (1986) also noted the importance of food for immigrant populations for maintaining social contacts and family bonds. However, no study focused on the higher levels of well-being, i.e., flourishing among diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Qualitative studies of lay people's perspectives on dimensions of flourishing are scarce, and it is unclear how the perspectives of people with high and low levels of well-being differ (Wissing et al., 2019). As the Dutch society is diverse in its ethnic backgrounds, the aim of this study is to explore how women from various ethnic cultural backgrounds flourish in the Netherlands.

Methods

Study design

The core of this qualitative study derived from an in-depth, semi-structured interview, conducted between April 2020 and May 2020. The study (200337) was approved by The Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences at the University of Twente.

Participants

This study involved four women from different ethnic backgrounds living in the Netherlands (see Table 1). The ethnic backgrounds were Albanian/Kosovar [Eastern Europe], Somali [East Africa], Yemeni [Western Asia] and Brazilian [South America]. The selection criteria were women, coming from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Women were carefully selected from a social network, i.e. acquaintances, family, friends, or colleagues of the researcher. Age ranged between 24 and 30 years. All participants received an invitation via a video- or phone-call, or face-to-face. Participants had to be at least 18 years old and had to speak either Dutch or English.

Table 2. Demographics of the participants (N=4)

| Name | Age | Gender | Ethnicity [Continent] | Current employment/education |
|------|-----|--------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Ar | 30 | Female | Yemeni [Western Asia] | Lawyer |
| So | 27 | Female | Somali [East Africa] | Medical Doctor |
| Br | 26 | Female | Brazilian [South America] | Beautician |
| Ko | 24 | Female | Albanian/Kosovar [East Europe] | Student Pedagogy |

Data collection

Participants gave informed consent for the use of transcribed data. The interviews were recorded and the recordings were not made available to anyone besides the researcher. The participants' anonymity was ensured by deleting names and places. Participants were given initials to ensure the participants' privacy.

Before the interviews were held, all participants were informed about the focus of flourishing in conversations. They were told that the topic of the interview would be flourishing and that the aim is to explore their views on flourishing. Explanations and theoretical underpinnings on flourishing were left out, to decrease any influence on the interviews. All conversations were held using a camera and microphone via Facetime or Skype. Both the researcher and participants were participating from their homes. To store the demographics, thoughts, feelings and experiences, a small notebook with notes was kept before and after all of the interviews.

Some questions were prepared beforehand to ensure the focus of flourishing in the interviews. These will be described below. The aim was to allow women to direct the course of the conversation, to shed light into their individual views and to ensure openness. Women were told that the use of images, quotes or books were allowed to be used during the conversations to

express themselves. Women were also told that they were free to share their views and were allowed to put an end to the interview without obligation.

The interviews started with a photo-exercise, where participants were asked to open their camera-roll on their phone and choose a photo that demonstrated flourishing. The participants were asked to elaborate on the choice of picture and detailed questions were asked to provide more in-depth understanding. This exercise functioned as an ice-breaker and the actual interview started from here. During the interview open questions were asked to provide a critical look into the participants' own presented views and to gain more insight on the women's backgrounds. Majority of the questions were built from the information provided by the women. Though some questions were prepared beforehand (see APPENDIX B). For example, the following questions were asked: "What are [other] things in your life that contribute to your life being meaningful?" or "What do you do to make your life worth living?" These questions were asked to achieve a deeper understanding. From here on, open questions were asked to explore the nature and cultural aspects of the views. Finally, the question: "How does your view on flourishing or well-being differentiate or complement other women in the Netherlands?" was asked to further delve and explore the ethnic view participants' had on flourishing. Then all interviews were ended by another exercise, where participants' were asked to assess their lives with one mark. This question was mainly added to provide a similar ending for all interviews.

The timespan per conversation ranged between 30 to 40 minutes. All interviews were verbatim transcribed and conducted in the Dutch- and English language. Explanations consisting of other languages, e.g. British-Slang, American-Slang, Albanian, Arabic, Somali or Portuguese were translated into the English language.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed using inductive content analysis (Kyngäs, 2019) via Atlas.ti. The unit of analysis was fragments that related to flourishing. In the first stage of analysis, all

transcribed data were read several times from beginning to end to get a grasp of the overall data. Then, per interview relevant fragments were highlighted, that were beneficial to answering the research questions. Fragments were chunks, large and small, of data consisting of explanations and responses of views on flourishing. Then one interview was coded once, to generate initial codes. Fragments could consist of several codes. Responses and expressions with similar meaning or relatable aspects were grouped into categories. Fragments that consisted more than one of the main categories, were coded for the most prominent category. This procedure was repeated for all four interviews. In order to ascertain the reliability of the codes and categories, the data was coded twice by the researcher. After ensuring the reliability of the codes, a complete content analysis was conducted and codes were distributed among overarching main categories (see Table 2). The main categories were named using content related words.

Table 2. Description of overarching categories for Flourishing and example quotes (N=4).

| Category | Description of the meaning of the different categories | Example Quotes |
|-----------|---|--|
| Family | Responses on how family, e.g. siblings or other relatives, contributes to happiness and meaning. This includes being together, sharing moments and happy memories, sharing emotions, and eating food together. | “I have always been raised with the idea that my family is everything and I generally feel happy when I am with them.” – (Ko, 24) |
| Community | Warm relationships of quality e.g. friends or social networks and being able to have conversations, besides family, if specifically mentioned. Being good to others and helping others. Any mention of social events with elaborations, e.g. presence of food | “I value her so much in my life. She is my best friend in the world. I do not know how to explain it in words. Whenever I feel like I need it, I can just pour my heart out. I think this is really crucial for me” – (Br, 26) |
| Religion | Viewing God as a helper, as love and as support. Relating religion to positive feelings such as peace. Explanations on how spirituality positively helps the self. | “ I am grateful for everything. Everything that comes from God, I am happy with it. I can manage it. You know sometimes you need the hard times, in order to see the good times.” – (Ko, 24) |
| Self-care | Me-time with explanation, reflecting on own thoughts and feelings, allowing time for the self, investing in the self, e.g. physically, mentally and emotionally. | “I do things that make me happy. Investing in myself by reading books and reflecting my life, sharing my emotions with my family. Being able to sometimes just sit and watch |

series. I get really happy with this.”– (Ar, 30)

| | | |
|-----------------|--|--|
| Purpose in life | Any mention or similar meaning to having goals in life, achieving goals, satisfaction in life due to achievements, rewarding sense of direction in life, motivation. | “ I get happy from the goals that I have. So for example education or work wise. Being mentally and emotionally happy.” – (So, 27) |
|-----------------|--|--|

Results

Five main categories emerged from the interviews on how women from diverse ethnic backgrounds flourish. The main categories are identified as family, community, religion, self-care, and purpose of life (see table 3). These categories were mentioned by all women during the interviews. The data are presented from most spoken to least present during the interviews.

Table 3. Frequencies of codes per participant (N=4).

| Codes | Frequencies per participant per interview | | | | Total |
|-----------------|---|----|----|----|-------|
| | Ar | So | Br | Ko | |
| Family | 7 | 8 | 6 | 8 | 29 |
| Community | 4 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 21 |
| Religion | 5 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 19 |
| Self-care | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 15 |
| Purpose in life | 4 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 12 |

Family

The most prominent topic during the interviews with women was family which contributed to their flourishing. The women extensively described family as being the most valuable aspect in their life. In the cultures of women, family was portrayed as the foundation of life and this view was held by all of the women. Quotes like “family is everything” were often mentioned by the women during the interviews. Aspects of how women explained family were being able to spend time together, sharing emotions and feelings, sharing experiences, understanding each other and celebrating achievements. During the interviews, the women expressed nostalgic recollections of achievements from family members. Interestingly, all women mentioned that achievements from family members contributed to positive feelings in their lives, e.g. happiness and excitement. One of the women from Somali descent spoke on how the achievements of her siblings brought her more happiness than her own achievements.

“Remember when XXX [little sister] graduated last year and we were so excited. Like I was more excited and happy than she was. My whole family was more excited and I think that differs with other people maybe. I feel like I have achieved something, if one of my siblings achieves something. And the fun part is, is that the happiness I feel and the feeling of achieving is way more intense than for example when I became a medical doctor. Same goes for my other sister XXX, when she graduated from her PhD, I do not know how to explain it, but it brings the feeling of being satisfied with your life and seeing that: you know what, this is what makes my life purposeful.” – So, 27

Additionally, the women spoke on how family settings differ in the Netherlands for them, than in their country of origin. In the Somali, Yemeni, Brazilian and Kosovar culture, multiple families such as uncles, cousins and siblings often live together. Also, it was common to have family everywhere in their own countries and to be around family. The majority of the women spoke on the limited amount of family they have in the Netherlands. Generally, the women only had their siblings and parents, due to migration. Hence, time for family is always

made by the women. When speaking about family, all women smiled and spontaneously talked about happy moments that they have shared.

“But family is the key to my happiness in life - Family is very important for me. As a Somali woman and I think I speak for the majority of Somali people, being with your family is everything. I do see that here in The Netherlands we live in a very rushed society, but still I have to make time for my family.”- So, 27

Community

A sense of having and belonging to a community, apart from family, was profoundly spoken on by all women of the different ethnic backgrounds. The underlying aspects they talked about were nurturing for others; sharing emotions, having warm and trusting relationships, being good to neighbours, less fortunate and others, being able to contribute in helping others and having real conversations. The aspects of helping others were mentioned as cultural values from the ethnic backgrounds of women. All women came from non-individualistic cultures and they indicated that being good to neighbours and less fortunate were values they were raised with. Helping others contributed to their satisfaction in life and elicited feelings of happiness. Three of four women stated that their choice of education and current employment also emerged from the longing to help others, which contributed to their sense of well-being. Interestingly all women commonly were employed in jobs where they helped others. One of the women from Somalia explained that helping others contributes to her flourishing.

“In this picture you see me with two babies in my arms. I was working in Aruba here and I was delivering babies. In this particular picture I feel like I did something good. By helping a person and making sure it went well and it felt satisfied. That is flourishing in general for me.” - So, 27

Food was central to social events, played an important role and consisted of a symbolic meaning in the lives of women. For the ethnic cultures, food functioned as promoting communication and interaction between loved ones and others. Although food was also spoken on in the interviews, when speaking about family, it was more profoundly mentioned in connection with community. Women supported the continuance of their Kosovar, Somali, Yemeni and Brazilian culture, by stressing the importance of food. Feeding others also emerged from their culture and ideological beliefs. A sense of well-being emerged from sharing food with neighbours, colleagues, family, friends and less fortunate.

“In my culture, being around people, sitting on the floor and just eating from shared plates are what brings us happiness, whilst I know that my co-workers at XXX find it amazing whenever I ask them, if they would also like to have some of my food, whilst this is normal for me.” – Ko, 24

Religion

The women mentioned that religion offered them support and purpose in life. All women were Muslim, believing in Allah and followed the ideology of Islam. Kosovo, Yemen and Somalia are initially Muslim countries. These ethnic cultures were greatly influenced by the religion of Islam and played an important role in the women’s upbringing. One of the women from Brazil reverted from Jehovian religion to Islam, and was not raised with Islam. She spoke less on religion than the other women from Yemen, Somalia and Kosovo during the interviews. Hence, religion was still spoken profoundly on. Women described that religion contributed to having positive feelings and the feeling of not being alone. The woman from Kosovo explained how practising her religion contributes to her well-being.

“I feel at peace whenever I pray, because I feel that I am not alone and someone is helping me. I always cry after my prayers and I feel relieved - I feel that ever since I am strong in my prayers, everything goes easier for me and I eventually feel better.” – Ko, 24

During the interviews, the women spoke on how the religion teaches them to see trials as blessings and to be thankful regardless of what happened. Even though religion had a major influence on culture, culture was not mentioned as an influence on how to practise the religion. Women related on how supplicating to Allah and performing the five daily obligatory prayers helped with feeling powerful and offered a way to emotionally express themselves. Furthermore women spoke on how practising their faith contributed to their views on how to live their lives. Interestingly, women indicated that religion was often in relationship with other domains, such as the norm on how to treat others. One of the women explained how treating others, e.g. less fortunate, emerged from the ethnic culture she was raised in. As she is from Yemen, Islam was fundamental in her upbringing. For her, religion is connected with her loving herself and offered her perspective on how to achieve love from God in return:

“Having a good relationship with God. I see this as a triangle. The upper corner of the triangle is ‘Allah - God’. In the triangle, you have two other corners underneath. One corner is ‘me’ and the other corner is ‘others, e.g. people.’ If I want to be good to God and vice versa, I have to be good to the people around me. If that is not the case, then it is only a one way street. I have to be good to others and treat others, as I want to be treated. I need to want for others, what I want for myself. But what is also important, is being good for yourself.. Really good for yourself. Self-love Is really important for me - So if you do not have self-love, you cannot love others and you cannot love God.” – Ar, 30

Self-care

The women introduced self-care with the synonym me-time or down-time. Caring for the self, in emotional, psychological and physical fields were reported as a meaningful aspect in women’s life. Majority of the women explained how this aspect was not part of their ethnic cultures. As women were raised in interdependent cultures, where it is culturally more expected to be selfless and to care for others. One of the women from Kosovo explained in the Dutch

culture, self-care is more valued than in Kosovar culture. Besides the importance of caring for the self, the women also spoke on varying characteristics of self-care, e.g. self-love, finding a balance between daily activities and time for the self and reflecting on life. Due to all women being employed and some also followed education, self-care is seen as a moment to relax and reflect. Besides, me-time resulted in the experience of positive emotions, e.g. as being at ease, peace of mind and happiness.

“I find it important to have a day off. That is the day where I invest in myself. I give four days a week to my career. So I need my day off, usually a Friday or Monday, to add that to my weekend, so that I have three days to invest in myself and my life.” – Ar, 30

Only one of the women spoke on how self-care in terms of the physical appearance is important to the well-being in Brazilian culture. The body for women is perceived as fundamental in the Brazilian culture, as it contributes to their happiness. The woman from Brazil indicated the essentiality of a cleaning ritual on the woman’s body. She explained how the ritual ‘‘Banho de Lua’’ (translated as Moon Bath) is performed by all Brazilian women at least once a month.

“For us women, our body is everything. So we have to make sure we look good. Always, because that is what makes us happy. So we have this ritual called ‘Banho de Lua- Moon bath’ And that is basically cleaning your whole body. I am not just talking about a long shower. It is basically cleaning and scrubbing yourself everywhere. We do this once a month and you start with your feet. You have to make sure everything is clean, get a pedicure. Same goes for your nails, the hair, body scrub, just everything. And this is just something that helps me to stay satisfied with myself and feel good about myself.” - Br, 26

Purpose in Life

Women spoke on how having purpose in life makes their lives worth living and contributed to emotional and mental happiness. Purpose of life was often identified as having

goals, learning from experiences and working hard. Aspects of goals were in depth explained as goals based on education, work, religion or physical results in self-satisfaction. Being intrinsically motivated to achieve goals and rewards, i.e., pay check, were also indicated as two important factors to a purposeful life: *“It’s all about persistence, consistence and pursuit of my potential.”* - So, 27 Notably, women indicated that their ethnic background, identity and negative events influenced their purpose in life. The Somali, Yemeni and Brazilian women explained how they experienced disadvantages and discrimination in the Netherlands due to their ethnic background, immigrant background and physical appearance. For example, the woman from Brazil spoke on how she was treated differently when she was accompanied with her white friend, in contrast to when she was accompanied with her black friend. She indicated to be more liked by others, when accompanied with her white friend. These negative experiences resulted in women having to work harder because of their ethnic backgrounds, but also showed how they eventually made more their lives more purposeful. The woman from Somalia explained how negative experiences helped her to achieve a higher sense of well-being.

“I live in the Netherlands, I am a woman and I am black Muslimah. If I look at the department, you only see white people. You would not say this would happen, but let’s just say you get disadvantaged. But because I know this is the case, I work even harder and eventually I feel like I am flourishing more than them. Due to disadvantages, I work harder, I get more out of my life, and it genuinely makes me happy and eventually my well-being gets better from this.”
- So, 27

Additionally, the majority of the women spoke on how culturally motivated views of gender roles contributed to their purpose of life. One of the women from Somalia spoke on how in African households, girls are often told to become a nurse and boys are told to become a police officer. She argued on why this could not be reversed. She believed that with hard work, everything is possible and that nurture and culture was not leading. Though, the women from

Brazil spoke on how women should not forget their role and hold on to the cultural views on women, e.g. by being a stay-at-home mom. Furthermore the Yemeni woman also spoke on how in her upbringing, hard work and being independent were fundamental:

“My dad always said to us girls, you should never have to beg a man to give you something and keep your hand open [Ar showing a movement where she opens her both hands]. We live in another country, now you have to be independent. I always saw my ethnicity as a bonus. I am not coming to get something, I am coming to give. I can give people another perspective on things. For me as a woman, this is how I am happy. I came to another country, I saw other values. Of course I am different. I have a different skin tone, different hair structure, but that makes me unique. We live in a blended society. This is an aspect of me being able to flourish. This is who I am. My culture and ethnicity are the reason why I am me and I am satisfied with myself” - AR, 30

Discussion

This qualitative in-depth interview study presented novel data on how four young adult women from Brazil, Kosovo, Somali and Yemen flourish and the results could be summarized into five main categories. Ordered from most elaborated on to least elaborated on during the interview, the most prominent topic contributing to flourishing was family, which was explained as a core element in all cultures. Another main topic was community, which was described as belonging to a community, helping others and food. After that the topic religion was presented, where Islam and Allah were the major elements. Then self-care followed, which was explained as me-time and reflecting on life. Then the last topic that followed was purpose in life, which was explained as having goals and was often inspired by negative events.

Main findings

Social well-being, positive relationships and the importance of food

The first and second major findings of the current study showed that social well-being and positive relationships, such as family and community were substantial for flourishing, however the domain food showed to be an important underlying factor on these two findings for the ethnic cultures. Firstly the definition of Keyes (2002, 2005) on flourishing shows both importance of social-well-being and positive relationships for flourishing. Also in general, theories on psychological well-being found positive relationships as major contributors for well-being and mental-health (Caughlin & Huston, 2010). Though participants in this study stated that food was highly associated with positive relations, i.e. community and family. Keyes definition of the ingredients associated with flourishing seemed to not focus on the aspect of food. Though in previous research, majority of ethnographers stated that food was an important factor for maintaining relations in ethnic cultures (McMichael & Manderson, 2014). For instance the study from McMichael & Manderson (2014) on the well-being of Somali women noted that in Somali culture, food functions as tool for socialization and contributed to a sense of well-being. The importance of preparing, sharing and consuming food with community and family were seen as important social values in the Somali culture (McMichael & Manderson, 2014). The research of McMichael & Manderson (2014) seems in line with the findings from this current study. Though it seems that the aspect of food and its influence on flourishing is not studied on as much in today's research. It may be that the constructs used in research on flourishing is limited to other domains of flourishing.

Importance of religion in religious ethnic cultures

The next finding of the current study was the importance and major role of religion to flourishing for religious ethnic cultures. Majority of the participants were raised with the ideology of Islam and with believing in Allah, participants experienced connection with and direction from Allah, which contributed to their satisfaction of life, happiness and purpose in life. Vishkin et al. (2016) and Ramsay et al. (2019) supported this view, wherein they suggested

that individuals who are actively practising their religion and who experience a connection with a higher power, seemed to evaluate their lives more positively, in contrast to individuals who did not have this religious connection. To religious ethnic cultures, religion seems to be an important ingredient to flourishing. For instance, a study by Stavrova et al. (2013) found that the effect of religion on satisfaction in life was substantially higher in religious cultures, whereas this was found lower in cultures where religion was not valued as much. Supporting this view, a study by Graham & Crown (2014) among hundred sixty nations, found that being religious in cultures with higher levels of religiousness, had greater influence on hedonic well-being, in contrast to cultures with lower levels of religiousness. Thus, a positive correlation between religion and hedonic well-being was found, moderated by culture (Graham & Crown, 2014). Even though research found that religion is a predictor for hedonic well-being, not all findings across studies resulted in this same outcome (Kim-Prieto & Miller, 2018). Other studies indicate a weak relationship between religion and hedonic well-being (Diener et al., 2011; Lun & Bond, 2013) or failed to report any association between religion and positive affect (Fabricatore et al., 2000). It could be that the mixed findings across studies resulted from the use of different methods of measuring or the use of different definitions of this particular domain. Though because this study proved the importance of religion for ethnic cultures, it may be suggested that more cross-cultural research is needed on religion and flourishing to determine if these findings are in line with other ethnic cultures.

Importance of self-care and influence of discrimination on ethnic cultures

Also another finding noted that all participants spoke on caring for others as a cultural aspect, however for majority of participants self-care was not culturally motivated, but still important for flourishing. In current research caring for the self is often seen as an individualistic value, whilst caring for others is more common in collective communities (Smith, Guzman & Erickson, 2018). There is also a stereotype on women for being more caring towards others and

harder to themselves in terms of self-kindness (Smith, Guzman & Erickson, 2018) . For instance, a study on self-kindness among ethnic cultures showed that men scored higher levels of self-kindness than women (Smith, Guzman & Erickson, 2018). Also research on elderly care among ethnic backgrounds indicated that adult children from Latin-American, African and East-Asians cultures are obliged to take care of their family members, even if they were incapable of doing so (Coon et al., 2004; Haley et al., 2004). The importance of taking care for others seems to be stressed on more in these ethnic cultures than taking care of themselves (Haley et al., 2004). In the current sample It may be the case that the participants adopted values from European or American cultures, as self-care was only mentioned to be culturally valued by one participant from Brazil. For instance, the process of globalization, where cultures exchange and influence each other has become powerful in the recent decades (Arnett, 2002, p. 774). Chiu et al. (2011) suggested that because of globalization, cross cultural distinctions could become increasingly smaller. On the contrary, a study on self-kindness among native Americans and white participants showed that Native Americans scored higher in self-kindness than the white participants (Smith, Guzman & Erickson, 2018). It may be that the participants views on self-care is more individually motivated or perhaps a result from globalization. If these findings were replicated, it may be important to explore more in depth what the definition of self-care is among different ethnic cultures.

Nevertheless it is interesting to note that a study by Poupart (2003) suggested that ethnic groups who experienced discrimination could internalize this, by being less kind to their own self. Though in the current study, participants spoke on how they experienced disadvantages and discrimination during their lives, but still valued and practised self-care and had a purposeful life. In line with these findings is a study by Keyes (2007) conducted in America, which stated that even with social inequality and discrimination, 27 percent of African Americans (Blacks) are more flourishing than non-Hispanic Caucasians (Whites). Though when controlling for discrimination, Blacks were found to have even more higher levels of flourishing than Whites

(Keyes, 2009). Therefore if these particular findings are replicated, it could also be important to discover and explore the influence of social inequality on aspects of flourishing.

Strengths and limitations

A strength of this study was its qualitative nature, wherein participants were able to direct the course of conversation. Another strength was that no definitions or theoretical underpinnings on flourishing were shared with participants, to avoid any influence of the researcher on the interview. Lastly, another strength was that the participants came from four different ethnic cultures, who were also from four different continents, to achieve more variety in the sample.

Several limitations apply to this study. Firstly, a strong limitation was that both interviews and coding processes were conducted by the same researcher, which should be taken into account when interpreting the findings. Another important limitation is that the views on flourishing for native Dutch individuals were not examined in this study, which could perhaps sketched a clearer overview on this topic and also offered room to indicate commonalities within the Dutch society. Also another limitation of this current study is its small sample size. For the scope of this study and the time available to conduct, a total of four women were interviewed and included. Thus the small sample size limits generalizability of this studies' results. Furthermore a final limitation was that the interviews were conducted mainly in Dutch language, including some words from the Portuguese language, Somali language, Arabic language, Kosovar language and words from the Dutch slang, British slang and American slang, and had to be translated to English language.

Implications for future studies

In future studies it is important to add first- and second coder to the research to ascertain more reliability for the results. It might also be important for other studies to adopt this

qualitative approach and to make use of loose frameworks and constructs when exploring flourishing for cultures. Previous research seems to fail to cover all domains important for varying ethnic cultures on flourishing and takes more a standpoint from European or American cultures. It may also be important to find a larger sample containing both ethnic minority cultures and European or American cultures to qualitatively explore what commonalities and or differences between varying cultures are present in flourishing. Also it may be interesting to find a diverse sample on age as well to indicate differences in lifespan and to determine how age affects the views on flourishing. Furthermore more research is needed to identify what the impact of having a different ethnic background is on flourishing, when living in a society of a European-American culture. Lastly the factor discrimination and social inequality seems to affect flourishing for this sample, though if these findings were replicated, the nature of this might be interesting to explore.

Conclusion

All in all, the results from this current study show that women from ethnic cultural backgrounds generally share the same main contributors to flourishing, which were family, community, religion, self-care and purpose of life. This study explored the thoughts and cultural views on these main contributors and detailed descriptions of ingredients for flourishing were given by participants. Though the findings seem not to be entirely in line with previous research on ingredients of flourishing. This study for instance notes how some contributors of flourishing, which might not be valued universally, can play a major role in flourishing, e.g. sharing food and religion. This study enriches knowledge on flourishing for ethnic cultures and suggests that more qualitative research on flourishing among varying cultures is necessary to get a grasp of views and identify how other ethnic cultures flourish, to determine a more broad perspective on universal flourishing. Therefore this study sheds light on how cultural ethnic backgrounds can offer diverse perspectives and meaning on how to flourish.

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APPROVED BMS EC RESEARCH PROJECT REQUEST

Dear researcher,

This is a notification from the BMS Ethics Committee concerning the web application form for the ethical review of research projects.

Requestnr. : 200337
Title : How does a diverse population flourish? A qualitative interview study
Date of application : 2020-03-17
Researcher : Schotanus-Dijkstra, M.
Commission : Klooster, P.M. ten
Usage of SONA : N

Your research has been approved by the Ethics Committee.

The ethical committee has assessed the ethical aspects of your research project. On the basis of the information you provided, the committee does not have any ethical concerns regarding this research project.

It is your responsibility to ensure that the research is carried out in line with the information provided in the application you submitted for ethical review. If you make changes to the proposal that affect the approach to research on humans, you must resubmit the changed project or grant agreement to the ethical committee with these changes highlighted.

Moreover, novel ethical issues may emerge while carrying out your research. It is important that you re-consider and discuss the ethical aspects and implications of your research regularly, and that you proceed as a responsible scientist.

Finally, your research is subject to regulations such as the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the Code of Conduct for the use of personal data in Scientific Research by VSNU (the Association of Universities in the Netherlands), further codes of conduct that are applicable in your field, and the obligation to report a security incident (data breach or otherwise) at the UT.

Klooster, P.M. ten (18-03-2020 11:34):

It is noted that you already anticipate potential alternative ways to collect data given de Corona outbreak.

Klooster, P.M. ten (18-03-2020 11:32):

NB: The approval given for your research project is **CONDITIONAL**. Your study intends to make use of methods requiring social and physical interaction. This poses risks for both participants and researchers, which have to be taken into account. You have to **COMPLY** with the current **RESTRICTIONS ON SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL INTERACTION** regarding the COVID19 outbreak. This may imply that you have to find alternative ways to collect data or to delay the start of your study until the restrictions have been adjusted or lifted. If adjustments lead to substantive changes in the design of your study (excluded: digital/online means to get in contact with your participants), send your changes to ethics committee-bms@utwente.nl stating your request number. Please consult the standing guidelines of the UT and national authorities on research and educational activities www.utwente.nl/corona

APPENDIX B

Prepared interview questions:

1. What are [other] things in your life that contribute to your life being meaningful?”
2. “What do you do to make your life worth living?”
3. “How does your view on flourishing or well-being differentiate or complement other women in the Netherlands?”