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The Impact of the Sense of Community on the Quality of Life of Forced Migrants

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The Impact of the Sense of Community on the Quality of Life of Forced Migrants

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Abstract

Forced migration is an endemic and worldwide phenomenon that results from human or nature induced conflicts such as (violent) conflicts, persecution or natural disasters. People are coerced to migrate to seek safety since they are often at the risk of their life. The issue of forced migration is generally tackled through institutions and international legal systems through top-down approaches, especially because forced migrants often have to cross international borders. While some forced migrants have improved living conditions in comparison to their pre-migration situation, a lot of forced migrants end up in refugee camps, where they experience poor living conditions. There, they are often excluded from their host community and their humanitarian needs are not always met. A more collaborative and communal approach through human agency has been neglected in comparison to the top-down approaches. For voluntary migrants, interactions and relationships with the host community have been shown to benefit their well-being. This thesis aims to examine how the sense of community affects the quality of life of forced migrants, especially when they arrive in their host community, because forced migrants often have to leave their home community and family network behind.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, the world has been increasingly experiencing the effects of climate change. The availability of resources is decreasing and in some parts of the world people lack food, water and arable land (Abel et al., 2019). This often leads to conflicts or even civil war and consequently people are forced to migrate (Braithwaite, Salehyan & Savun, 2018). Other reasons why people are forced to migrate include natural disasters, persecution and famine (Castles, 2003; Becker & Ferrera, 2019). Whether forced migrants are displaced within the borders of their home country or cross international borders to seek safety, they encounter several obstacles and negative consequences (Betts, 2014). Some of them include violence, economic loss, physical and psychological distress and in some cases even death (Becker & Ferrera, 2019). Due to climate change, more and more people are coerced to migrate and to face these hardships (Castles, 2003). This increase in forced migration poses a challenge to the international community since it is “an inherent part of international politics” (Betts, 2014). When states cannot protect their citizens anymore and they are forced to migrate to another state, international protection is needed (Braithwaite, Salehyan & Savun, 2018; Betts, 2014). However, through global efforts, the top-down models used to tackle the issue of forced migration are very dominant and this is not always beneficial for forced migrants (Lori & Boyle, 2015; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2014; Ruiz & Vargas-Silva). This is due to a systematic bias that leads to telling people in humanitarian crisis what is good for them instead of making them part of the process (Abu-Zahra et al., 2019). The “deterministic, top-down nature [of political powers] leaves little room for human agency” regarding forced migration (De Haas, 2014). Therefore it is important to further research human agency in the sending and host community (Castles, 2003). For voluntary migrants it has been shown that reciprocal ties and trusting relationships with the host community benefit their well-being (Colson, 2003). Therefore, the same should be researched for forced migrants, who often have to leave their belongings, community and family networks behind (Jacobsen, 2014; Diaconu et al., 2016). The need for a more collaborative and community- based approach for forced migrants leads to the following research question:

What is the effect of the sense of community on the quality of life of forced migrants?

This question is scientifically and practically relevant because forced migration is an ongoing and increasingly occurring global issue that requires several methods of solutions. Even though several

policies regarding forced migration have been established on a global and national level (Hathaway, 2007, p. 349), the issue should also be tackled on a regional and communal level. In particular, the latter has been neglected (De Haas, 2014; Castles, 2003). The involvement of the host community and efforts to better include forced migrants supports building a sustainable life for forced migrants in the societal community (Gagnon & Rodrigues, 2020). This is especially of importance when environmental forced migrants cannot return to their home country because it might be destroyed or not habitable anymore due to the consequences of climate change (Rodrigues & Gagnon, 2020; Hovil & Lomo, 2015).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

Forced migration results from human or nature induced conflicts such as natural disasters, (violent) conflicts, persecution or other human rights violations (Shultz et al., 2014; Schmeidl, 1997). People affected by these kinds of situations are thereby coerced to leave their place of residence in order to escape (the risk of) death traps (Hathaway, 2007). Due to climate change, and its effects like droughts, land degradation and other natural disasters forced migration is increasing (Becker & Ferrera, 2019). Since the beginning of the last decade, the number of forcibly displaced people has been increasing every year (UNHCR, 2021). How this issue is tackled and what approaches could further benefit forced migrants will be discussed in the following sections.

2.2. Forced Migration Policy

Increased forced migration due to climate change calls for measures and solutions from the international community that take into account the hardships forced migrants have to face (Atapattu, 2009; Colson, 2003). Forced migration has been mostly tackled by international institutions through top-down approaches (Martin, 2001; Abu-Zahra et al., 2019). Institutions often get involved because when states fail to protect their citizens and citizens are forced to migrate, they often have to cross international borders (Betts, 2014; Atapattu, 2009). The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is the main international institution that coordinates and deals with forced migration (Castles, 2006). There are also several other international organizations (IOs) and NGOs that aim to provide humanitarian assistance to forced migrants (Martin, 2001). However, the impact of international institutions on forced migrants is often insufficient and not necessarily positive (Castles, 2003). This is partly due to structural flaws because not all forced migrants fall under the category such as *refugee*, which means that not all forced migrants are protected by international regimes (White, 2017). Furthermore, the top-down decisions made by IOs for forced migrants often lack strategy and in a lot of cases not enough resources are generated to meet the needs of forced migrants (Castles, 2003; White, 2017; Becker & Ferrera, 2019).

2.3. Quality of Life of Forced Migrants

Forced migrants have experienced trauma and loss throughout their migration process (Shultz et al., 2019; Diaconu et al., 2016). This includes material and cultural loss, since forced migrants have to leave behind their homes, assets and family network (Jacobsen, 2014; Diaconu et al., 2016). The trauma and loss forced migrants experience, takes a toll on their health, in particular their mental health (Shultz et al., 2014). Therefore, as a vulnerable population, forced migrants require access to shelter, medical care and social services (Braithwaite, Salehyan & Savun, 2018). Providing for such welfare and humanitarian assistance for forced migrants is mostly coordinated through the international community (Lori & Boyle, 2015). Jacobsen (2014) states that “forced migrants are entitled to enjoy the full range of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights set out in international and regional human rights treaties and customary international law”. In some cases, forced migrants have a better lifestyle in the host country, which contributes to their well-being (Ruiz & Vargas-Silva, 2012,). However, most of the time forced migrants are often not able or given the opportunity to enjoy economic, social and cultural rights, even when they arrive in the host country (Bozorgmehr & Razum, 2016). Forced migrants mostly end up in refugee camps, where they not only experience poorer living conditions in comparison to their pre-migration situation but sometimes also face human rights violations (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2014; Ruiz & Vargas-Silva, 2012; Diaconu et al., 2016). Furthermore, they often experience discrimination and inadequate health services (Lori & Boyle, 2015, p. 70; Darling, 2017, p. 180).

2.4. A Communal Approach to Forced Migration

In comparison to the international top-down approaches that tackle the issue of forced migration, more communal and horizontal approaches that include the voices of forced migrants are neglected (De Haas, 2014; Abu-Zahra et al., 2019). When a community or even a big group of people are forced to migrate, the community is often dispersed and family members are often separated, so cooperation as a community of forced migrants is unlikely (Darling, 2017; Marlowe & Bruns, 2021). In the host country, the further dispersal of forced migrants is aimed to spread and share the burden of forced migrants (Betts, 2014; Darling, 2017). A more horizontal and communal approach with the host community however, is challenged by refugee camps (Darling 2017). Living in refugee camps segregates forced migrants from their host community (Darling 2017). Therefore, it is difficult for forced migrants to “develop reciprocal ties” and a trusting relationship with their host community (Colson, 2003; Darling, 2017).

For voluntary migrants it has been shown that having these ties and relationships with the community helps “secure access to resources and to safeguard themselves” (Colson, 2003). Therefore it is possible for them to better adjust to their social and physical environment, which is important for one’s wellbeing (Colson, 2003). Several authors have acknowledged that it is also vital to research collaborative approaches between forced migrants and the host communities to improve forced migrants’ well-being (Abu-Zahra et al., 2019). Overall, it “is vital to investigate the human agency of the forced migrants and of the sending and receiving communities” (Castles, 2003)

2.5. Conclusion

Forced migration is a contemporary global issue, that requires global efforts in order to care for forced migrants (Lori & Boyle, 2015). However, the involvement of international institutions and international legal systems do not always have a positive effect on forced migrants (Ruiz & Vargas-Silva, 2012; Diaconu et al., 2016). The top-down approaches often determine where forced migrants end up and they are often excluded from the receiving community (Martin, 200; Darling, 2017). It has been shown that a sense of community and human agency is beneficial for voluntary migrants but a more communal approach for forced migrants is essential to investigate (Colson, 2003; Castles, 2003) .

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Theoretical Argument and Hypothesis

The environment we live in and the people we are surrounded by are undeniably important for our well-being (Gattino et al., 2013; Ziersch et al., 2005). Feeling close to our community allows us to live more freely due to a feeling of safety and provides us with a feeling of comfort (Rollero, Gattino & Piccoli, 2013). Our place of residence allows us to socialize and build interpersonal relationships, which positively affects individual health and therefore our overall well-being (Ventegodt, Merrick & Andersen, 2003; Gattino et al., 2013). There are even empirical findings that show psychological benefits of having a strong sense of community, which includes social relationships and attachment to a place (Ziersch et al., 2005; Gattino et al., 2013). On the flip side, “perceptions of health problems are correlated with lack of sense of community” (Gattino et al., 2013).

People, who are forced to migrate have to leave their whole life and community behind (Castles, 2003). Consequently, this has a negative impact on their quality of life because they lose their overall sense of community (Gattino et al., 2013). Nation states that then receive forced migrants have the responsibility to look after them because according to international law and the push for human rights, states are responsible for the welfare of their population (Smith, 2001). However, forced migrants have a different status than national citizens and some of them do not even have a refugee status but are undocumented migrants (Bozorgmehr & Razum, 2016). That is why they often live as “second-class residents” (Diaconu et al., 2016) lacking certain rights and freedoms. As a result, human rights are often violated in the receiving country (Bozorgmehr & Razum, 2016), which decreases the quality of life of forced migrants. Most forced migrants end up in refugee camps, where women and girls often experience gender-based violence (Diaconu et al., 2016). Refugee camps also lead to segregation (Darling, 2017). The segregation through refugee camps prevents forced migrants from being integrated into the host societies (Darling, 2017). This makes the sense of community with their host community almost impossible, which is however important for one’s wellbeing (Ventegodt, Merrick & Andersen, 2003).

As a result, forced migrants are alienated and excluded from their host community, which can be a psychological challenge and decreases their quality of life (Becker & Ferrara, 2019; Hörnquist, 1989). Another challenge results from the dispersal of forced migrants, as they often do not flee as a family, so they lose their family network and family functions, which is an integral part of the

quality of life (Stepputat & Sørensen, 2014; Lawton et al., 1999). For this reason a supportive host community is especially important for forced migrants because the host community can provide these functions such as “protection and emotional support” (Stepputat & Sørensen, 2014). Furthermore, due to the fact that forced migrants leave their community and life behind, they often suffer from loss of identity (Castles, 2003). Host communities could support forced migrants with re-socialization and rebuilding their identity (Castles, 2003). Therefore integration into the host communities would be advantageous so forced migrants do not have to deal with their hardships by themselves but rather as a united community with locals from their city or village (Hovil & Lomo, 2015). Professionals that work in the field of human services emphasize that forced migrants require a communal support system by means of group counseling and learning to interact with their social environment in their host community (Diaconu et al., 2016). Therefore, sense of community seems to be particularly important for forced migrants. Overall, unity between forced migrants and their host community would lead to “an organic interaction” (Hovil & Lomo, 2015) between them so both sides could benefit from each other. This would decrease tensions between forced migrants and their host community since they cooperate with each other horizontally (Hovil & Lomo, 2015). Overall, this would have positive effects on the quality of life of forced migrants in terms of their mental well-being due to increased social interactions (Rollero, Gattino & Piccoli, 2013). An example of cooperation would be the involvement in new economic or business opportunities, which also prevents forced migrants from working in informal economics (Becker & Ferrara, 2019; Hovil & Lomo, 2015). Finally, forced migrants would live more comfortably in terms of their income, which also increases their quality of life (Lawton et al., 1999).

This overall theoretical argument leads to the following hypothesis:

The stronger the sense of community in the host country, the better the quality of life of forced migrants.

3.2. Main Concepts

The main concepts that are crucial to understand this research are forced migration, sense of community, quality of life and (subjective) health.

3.2.1. Forced Migration

3.2.1.1. General Definition

Among the scientific community there is a consensus regarding the general concept of forced migration. Forced migration is mostly defined as the unplanned movement of people as a result of (violent) conflicts, persecution, repression, natural -or human-made disasters (Goetz, 2005; White, 2017; Becker & Ferrera, 2019). Thereby people escape (the risk of) getting harmed or endangering their lives (Hathaway, 2007; White, 2017). A crucial aspect of forced migration is the coercion to leave their home country, however it is not always clear where to draw the line at which point people are forced to leave their home (Bozorgmehr & Razum, 2017; Castles, 2006).

3.2.1.2. Categorization of Forced Migrants

Forced migrants are divided into several categories. These categories are the outcome of political negotiations by states and IOs (Castles, 2006). They are important for administrative purposes and legal situations as they entail the type of protection and assistance forced migrants receive (Diaconu et al., 2016).

For this thesis, it is sufficient to understand the three major categories of forced migrants, which are mostly used in the field of forced migration: refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons (IDPs) (Diaconu et al., 2016).

First of all, forced migrants are sometimes generally referred to as refugees and a lot of authors use these terms interchangeably even though it is technically speaking a subcategory (Castles, 2006). Refugees are people living outside of their state of nationality and are not able or willing to return due to the fear of persecution by reason of “race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion” (UNHCR, 2020). Refugees often end up in transitional refugee camps and apply for legal and social protection before taking refuge in the host country (Diaconu et al., 2016). Haddad (2003) conceptualizes refugees as the side-effect of the failure of sovereign states to protect their citizens. Consequently, refugees end up not being included as a citizen in a state, in one territory (Haddad, 2003).

Secondly, asylum seekers are people who cross international borders in order to seek safety and protection (Kalt et al., 2013; Castles, 2006). However, in contrast to refugees, asylum seekers are only eligible for protection after entering the host country and not before (Diaconu et al., 2016). They are still waiting for the decision on receiving refugee status they applied for so they do not receive all the privileges that refugees are given (Douglas et al., 2019; Diaconu et al., 2016).

Consequently this long waiting period until they get legal status in order to resettle creates uncertainty for them (Castles, 2006; Diaconu et al., 2016).

Thirdly, in contrast to refugees and asylum seekers, internally displaced persons (IDPs) seek refuge within their national borders (Mooney, 2005). IDPs are people who were forced to leave their homes or place of residence and flee to another place within their country of residence due to (violent) conflicts, persecution, human-made or natural disasters in order to find safety (Douglas et al., 2019; Castles, 2006). Even though governments might be the cause for their migration, they are still protected as citizens under the national government (UNHCR, 2021).

3.2.1.3. Citizenship

When forced migrants arrive in a country they do not receive citizenship, in fact it is not even a given that they receive legal status that allows them settle down (Diaconu et al., 2016).

Refugees, that are often referred to as forced migrants (Becker & Ferrara, 2019; Castles, 2006) have a refugee status but not citizenship (Haddad, 2003). Asylum seekers as another major group of forced migrants do not even have a refugee status, let alone citizenship (Diaconu et al., 2016).

Therefore citizenship is a crucial indicator for a forced migrant, however this does not include IDPs.

3.2.2. Sense of Community

Sarason (1974) is seen as a pioneer with regard to the development and conceptualization of the sense of community (Nowell & Boyd, 2010). He describes this concept as a sense of belonging to a “readily available mutually supportive network of relationships” (Sarason, 1974) that one can rely on, which consequently prevents feeling lonely. However, a consistent and influential framework of the sense of community was developed by McMillan and Chavis in 1986 (Nowell & Boyd, 2010).

This framework has four fundamental elements with several subelements (Wise, 2015).

The first one is membership, which determines who belongs to a community. Furthermore, membership entails “Emotional safety” (McMillan, 2011) meaning that people feel safe to be honest and open. Membership also means that the members feel like they belong to and are accepted by the community (McMillan, 2011).

The second element is influence and trust (McMillan, 2011). Overall this means that members influence the community and vice versa for example through aligning norms and behavior (McMillan, 2011). By contributing to the community, members make a difference and matter to the community (Nowell & Boyd, 2010).

The third element is “Integration of Fulfillment of Needs” (McMillan, 2011) where the community satisfies the needs of their members. The members trade and share values, skills, resources and hand off responsibilities to the following generation (McMillan, 2011).

The fourth element is a “Shared Emotional Connection” (McMillan, 2011) which entails that members share quality time and history.

Later on the McMillan (2011) added a fifth and sixth element that implicate a shared history with rituals and traditions which create a “spiritual bond” (McMillan, 2011).

These elements apply to relational and territorial communities (Brodsky & Marx, 2001).

Nowell and Boyd (2010) criticize this framework and aimed to add to the conceptualization of the sense of community. They claim that the McMillan and Chavis framework (1986) is purely needs-based, where the community serves as a resource to meet the members’ physical and psychological needs (Nowell & Boyd, 2010). Responsibility is excluded, which is why the authors added the theoretical lens: sense of community as responsibility (Nowell & Boyd, 2010). This lens implies that member should benefit and contribute to their community, not for personal gain but as a social responsibility (Nowell & Boyd, 2010).

3.2.3. *Quality of Life*

Quality of life is a broad multifaceted concept with several components and dimensions (Rollero, Gattino & Piccoli, 2014).

Overall, the quality of life simply describes a person’s well-being (Liu, 1975; Ferris, 2004). It is also reflected in a person’s happiness and satisfaction with life, which is subjective (Liu, 1975).

Hörnquist (1989) identifies several components that make up the quality of life. Those are “physical capabilities, emotional status, social interactions, intellectual functioning, economic status and self-perceived health status” (Hörnquist, 1989). Cummins (2005) states that the quality of life has several objective characteristics that can be measured through a public domain and subjective characteristics that are part of a persons private conscience. A sufficient assessment of the quality of life should consider both these domains (Cummins, 2005). In contrast Ferris (2004) conceptualizes quality of life as the well-being which is indicated by subjective or/and objective indicators, not necessarily both. Ventegodt, Merrick and Andersen (2003) state that the quality of life, which they simply describe as a living a good life, can be measured through a spectrum from subjective to objective measures.

The overall subjective quality of life indicates how an individual perceives their life for example how happy they are and how satisfied they are with life (Ventegodt, Merrick & Andersen, 2003).

Subjective quality of life also includes experiences people have with life based on their feelings and according to each individual's standards (Diener & Suh, 1997).

The objective quality of life is based on quantitative statistics and is measured through factors such as income, social life and the state of health (Ventegodt, Merrick & Andersen, 2003; Lawton et al., 1999). Other additional factors to that are part of the objective quality of life are education, occupation, family network and membership in organizations (Lawton et al., 1999). However, these factors cannot be isolated from the cultural environment a person lives in (Ventegodt, Merrick & Andersen, 2003). For this reason objective factors are measured in a geographical or cultural unit (Diener & Suh, 1997). The World Health Organization (WHO) emphasizes the subjective dimension of the quality of life but also includes the cultural context. The "WHO defines Quality of Life as an individual's perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns" (WHO, 2021).

3.2.4. (Subjective) Health

The concept of health can be understood as the condition or state of someone's well-being but is overall a versatile and vague concept (Dolfman, 1973). This is the case because people have different interpretations and understandings of this concept (Simmons, 1989; Dolfman, 1973). Health can be an end that is desirable and that we strive for (Boorse, 1977; Simmons, 1989). Health can also be seen as the result from the harmony of body, environment and lifestyle (Simmons, 1989). In conventional medicine, good health indicates the absence of disease or any biomedical health issues (Elovainio & Kivimäki, 2000; Boorse, 1977). In addition, health means having normal efficient body functions such as respiration or basal metabolism, where normal refers to the statistical normality (Boorse, 1977). The WHO defines health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (WHO, 2021). Subjective health refers to the subjective perception and experiences of one's health (Elovainio & Kivimäki, 2000). The subjective state of health is therefore a self-evaluation of one's general health that includes overall physical, physiologic and mental health (Baron-Epel & Kaplan, 2001). Subjective health also includes the feeling of happiness, life satisfaction and is an important factor in the quality of life (Kaplan, Barell & Lusky, 1988; Elovainio & Kivimäki, 2000). Subjective health also has a social dimension because people feel healthy when they function in a social environment or context (Siegrist & Junge, 1990; Elovainio & Kivimäki, 2000). Social health entails

how an individual gets along with other people and how an individual “interacts with social institutions and societal norms” (Siegrist & Junge, 1990).

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Design

This research is based on a quantitative statistical method using a large number of cases. The statistical method allows to examine the relationship between the two variables, the sense of community and the quality of life of forced migrants (Field, 2018). An advantage of this method is that it avoids selection bias, which is useful since forced migrants from all over the world are considered. However, a statistical analysis that includes countries from all over the world is insensitive to local contexts, meaning that for example the standards of a good quality of life differ across countries (Diener & Suh, 1997). Or, what might be considered a strong sense of community in one country, might be considered weaker in another country.

There are several authors who used a quantitative approach in the field of forced migration. For examples, Beckman and Rowe (2021) researched the occupational trajectories and outcomes of forced migrants in Sweden. Kolbe and Henne (2014) examined the effect of religious restrictions on forced migration. Similarly this research focuses on the effect of the sense of community on forced migrants.

An ideal data set would include a variable that indicates whether the respondent is a forced migrant or not, so the analysis can be run for the target group. Ideally, there would be a large number of respondents in a specific geographical area. The ideal data set would also contain all relevant variables for this research. Firstly, the explanatory variable sense of community, which could be treated as an interval-ratio variable if it had a scale from 1 to 10 for example. 1 could indicate no sense of community and 10 an extreme sense of community. Similarly, the quality of life could also be treated as an interval-ratio variable with a scale from 1 to 10. Both variables would be subjective and represent the direct experience of the respondent, so the forced migrant.

4.2. Statistical Model

The most appropriate model for answering the research question and interpret the relationship between the sense of community and quality of life of forced migrants is Ordinary Least Squares (OLS). Linear regression is suitable here because in order to answer the research question it is insufficient to find out the difference between two means but how the quality of life changes as the the sense of community changes (Field, 2018). In the research question the explanatory and the

outcome variable are interval-ratio variables which also speaks for a linear regression model as it describes the distribution for an interval-ratio Y (Field, 2018).

4.3. Data Set

In order to investigate and test this hypothesis most accurately, the dataset from the World Values Survey Wave 7 (2017-2020) was used. The adult population as a representative sample of 51 states was surveyed through interviews by means of a common questionnaire (Haerpfer et al., 2020). This data set contains the direct responses of people about their values, experiences etc. Hence this data set is advantageous for this research because the answers from the interview as a primary source come from the relevant target audience. Another advantage is the high number of respondents making up more than 76 000 cases in the data set. This is however before before selecting forced migrants. This data set is suitable for this analysis since it contains indicators of the independent variable sense of community and the dependent variable quality of life as well as the control variable.

4.4. Respondents (Cases)

Since this research question is focused on a specific group of people —forced migrants — first the analysis was made for non-citizens and then for comparison for citizens. As mentioned in the conceptualization, refugees and asylum seekers are two out of the three major categories of forced migrants. They do not have citizenship in the country they migrated to and sometimes do not even receive a refugee status (Haddad, 2003). For this reason, forced migrants were selected through the criterion of citizenship. However it is important to point out that not all people that are non-citizens in the country they reside are forced migrants. People that just migrated to a country voluntarily who have not been granted citizenship (yet) might also be included in this group. In addition, running the analysis for noncitizen excludes IDPs who are forced migrants but were forcibly displaced within the borders of their place of residency (Mooney, 2005). Strictly categorizing a group of forced migrants was generally found to be an issue when it comes to methodology because forced migration has developed alongside with studies of economic and even voluntary migration (Stepputat & Sørensen, 2014). In fact, "forced migration research has been criticized for lacking sound methodological principles" (Stepputat & Sørensen, 2014) because data collection was brought about by international institutions to improve logistics. Generally, there is a lack of data

that contains information of the perspectives of forced migrants (Stepputat & Sørensen, 2014). Furthermore, a lot of researchers in refugee studies do not reveal important methodological components in order to reduce the suffering of the people involved in the research and due to security issues (Stepputat & Sørensen, 2014). The 2002 volume of *Journal of Refugee Studies* also revealed issues regarding methods of data collection which relied on snowballing and hardly on large-scale survey data sets (Stepputat & Sørensen, 2014). For these reasons, even though the data set and filter for this research are not perfect, it is the most suitable.

4.5. Variables

4.5.1. Independent Variable

The independent variable in the research question is sense of community. The variable in the data set that is suitable for the sense of community is Q255 ‘Feel close to your village, town or city’ (Haerpfer et al., 2020). Feeling close to your local circle indicates being part of a community. This again is defined as a sense of belonging in the conceptualization of the sense of community (Sarason, 1974). Even though this variable does not explicitly entail interpersonal relationships, “place attachment has been identified with emotional bonding and behavioural commitment” (Francis et al., 2012). These features —emotional bond and behavioral commitment are both important features of the sense of community (McMillan, 2011).

In the data set this variable is a nominal variable with four categories. The category with the value 1 represents feeling very close to your village, town or city and 4 represents feeling not close at all to your village, town or city (Haerpfer et al., 2020). A scale from 1 to 4 is not a typical Likert scale and not big enough to be treated as an interval-ratio variable (Joshi et al., 2015). For this reason, the independent variable was changed to several dummy variables. For the analysis the variables with the categories ‘very close’, ‘close’ and ‘not very close’ were used and the category ‘not close at all’ is the reference category, which makes the most sense for the interpretation as the hypothesis assumes that the stronger the sense of community (i.e. the feeling to the village, town or city) the better the quality of life (i.e. the satisfaction with life). The variable also had values from -1 to -5. These values were used when the respondent did not know the answer, did not answer at all, was not asked about the feeling or the values were simply missing. The values -1 to -5 were already identified as missing values in the data set, so the dummy variables that were created with these categories can be ignored.

4.5.2. Dependent Variable

The dependent variable in the research question is quality of life and the variable in the data set Q49 ‘Satisfaction with your life’ (Haerpfer et al., 2020) is the most suitable as this reflects the overall quality of life from the view of the respondents. Satisfaction with life is a direct indicator of the (subjective) quality of life (Liu, 1975; Ventegodt, Merrick & Andersen, 2003). This variable includes several factors that make up the quality of life as discussed in the conceptualization (Hörnquist, 1989). However it is important to keep the aspect of subjectivity and cultural context in mind. Certain living conditions that satisfy one person do not necessarily satisfy another person, especially because the respondents are not all from the same geographical area (Diener & Suh, 1997; Haerpfer et al., 2020). In the data set, the variable is a nominal variable and has a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 represents complete dissatisfaction with life and 10 represents complete satisfaction with life. Therefore the variable can be treated as interval-ratio, which is essential for linear regression (Field, 2018). In the data set I changed the variable from nominal to scale. Here again, the values -1 to -5 indicate them same as pointed out for the independent variable (Haerpfer et al., 2020).

4.5.3. Control Variables

A crucial control variable to avoid a spurious association between the sense of community and quality of life of forced migrants is the health of forced migrants (Field, 2018). In general, self-perceived health is an indicator for the quality of life and therefore an explanatory factor for the quality of life (Hörnquist, 1989).

In the case of forced migration, the hardships and extreme life changes of forced migration have harmful effects on the health of forced migrants, even in the long run (Haukka et al., 2017), which consequently has an effect on their quality of life. For examples, expellees who were forced to migrate have a “higher mortality risk after the age of 68” (Becker & Ferrara, 2019). Furthermore, forced migrants often suffer from mental health disorders such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which also affects their quality of life (Diaconu et al., 2016). On top of that, forced migrants often do not have access or only limited access to health care, which negatively impacts their quality of life as well (Braithwaite, Salehyan & Savun, 2018). For these reasons it is crucial to control for health, so that its values are being held constant (Field, 2018). In the data set the variable Q47 ‘State of health (subjective)’ (Haerpfer et al., 2020) is suitable. The variable is nominal with a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 indicates a very good and 5 a very poor state of health (Haerpfer et al.,

2020. A five point scale is a typical Likert scale but not with a high range of values ((Joshi et al., 2015). In the analysis this variable is treated as interval-ratio, which is subject to debate among the scientific community (Norman, 2010). Jamieson (2004) states that the response categories are ranked in an order and it is not a given that the intervals between each values are equal. Furthermore he states that the statistics vary for ordinal and interval-ratio variables and if the wrong statistical model is used, it is more likely to come to a faulty conclusion (Jamieson, 2004). Strictly speaking these statements are true but he does not address to what extent it is likely to come to a wrong conclusion (Norman, 2010). For that reason, robustness indicates how much a statistical test “will give the right answer even when assumptions are violated” (Norman, 2010). Moreover, modern parametric statistical methods are very versatile and comprehensive and as Norman (2010) put it: “If [...] we cannot use parametric methods on Likert scale data, and we have to prove that our data are exactly normally distributed, then we can effectively trash about 75% of our research on educational, health status and quality of life assessment”. Also, even though we cannot be sure that the distance between each interval is equal, this is does not matter as the computer is incapable of confirming or denying it (Norman, 2010).

5. Analysis and Results

5.1. Number of Cases

After filtering out citizens to get respondents that are noncitizens, which is as discussed a criterion of forced migrants, there were 2730 cases left. In order to keep a substantial amount of cases, this analysis and general research is not limited to a specific geographical area. Also, the respondents are from 51 countries all over the world, so taking for example Africa as one geographical area, only 5 countries would have been included, which is not quite representative. This is a limitation for this research because results may vary across different cultures and geographical areas. As mentioned for the variables, quality of life and sense of community might differ for the same values, since a good quality of life in one country may for example be a bad quality of life in another country (Diener & Suh, 1997)

5.2. Analysis of the Quality of Life of Forced Migrants

5.2.1. Bias

When checking for bias of multiple linear regression analysis, one problem was identified, which is outliers. Cases that are outliers are known to differ substantially from the main pattern in the data (Field, 2018). More than 150 cases had a standardized residual smaller than -2, which could be a cause of concern. These cases were filtered out and the analysis was run again. The results changed after filtering out these cases, meaning that these potentially alarming cases differed from the main pattern of the data (Field, 2018). The table in the following sections presents the results of the analysis. Model 1 shows the linear regression without and model 2 with the control variable.

5.2.2. Interpretation of Results

5.2.2.1. Linear Regression Table

Table 1. Linear regression model of the quality of life of forced migrants

	Model 1	Model 2
(Constant)	6.474*** (0.196)	7.701*** (0.213)
Sense of community = Very close	0.560** (0.205)	0.482* (0.199)
Sense of community = Close	0.467* (0.207)	0.480* (0.201)
Sense of community = Not very close	0.067 (0.226)	0.116 (0.220)
State of health (subjective)		-0.638*** (0.050)
R ²	0.008	0.066
Adj. R ²	0.007	0.065
N	2562	2562

Note: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in brackets.

***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, * p < 0.05

5.2.2.2. Formal Reporting and Interpretation

Someone feeling not very close to their village, town or city can be expected, on average, to be 0.116 points more satisfied with their life (on a 1-10 scale) than someone who does not feel close at all to their village, town or city, *ceteris paribus/ holding all other variables constant*. This difference is not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). For this research, it means that having a slightly better sense of community in comparison to not having any sense of community at all does not increase the quality of life of a forced migrant.

Someone feeling close to their village, town or city can be expected, on average, to be 0.480 points more satisfied with their life (on a 1-10 scale) than someone who does not feel close at all to their village, town or city, *ceteris paribus/ holding all other variables constant*. This difference is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Someone feeling very close to their village, town or city can be

expected, on average, to be 0.482 points more satisfied with their life (on a 1-10 scale) than someone who does not feel close at all to their village, town or city, *ceteris paribus/ holding all other variables constant*. This difference is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). This shows that a sense of community does increase the quality of life of forced migrants especially in comparison to those that do not have a sense of community at all. There is barely a difference between someone feeling very close and feeling close to their village, town or city. Hence, the hypothesis that the stronger the sense of community, the better the quality of life of forced migrants, barely holds but it can be confirmed. Generally speaking, having a sense of community increases the quality of life of forced migrants. This analysis helped answering the research question since it showed the positive effect of the sense of community on the quality of life of forced migrants.

5.2.2.3. The R-Square

The R^2 of 0.066 is relatively low as it ranges from 0 to 1 but is still a lot higher than in model 1, which happens when (an)other variable(s) is/are added. The R^2 indicates that 6.6% of the total variation in the satisfaction with the life of forced migrants can be explained by the feeling to their village, town or city. For this research this means that the sense of community is not a major factor that accounts for the quality of life, however at least more than 5%. The R^2 also implies that by using the linear regression model, the prediction errors are proportionally reduced. Therefore, the feeling towards village, town or city to predict the satisfaction with life of forced migrants is better in comparison to only using the mean as a guess.

With the F-value it is possible to compare the change in R^2 for hierarchical linear regression (Field, 2018). The suitable F-test helps comparing nested models (Field, 2018). The value of F associated with the R^2 increase after adding the control variable is 45.204. The corresponding p-value is smaller than 0.001. This means that under the null hypothesis of no effect there is a significant increase of R^2 in model 2 in comparison to model 1. The null hypothesis can thereby be rejected that the feeling towards village, town or city has no effect on life satisfaction controlling for the state of health at any conventional level of significance. For the research, this implies that the sense of community has a significant effect on the quality of life of forced migrants, *ceteris paribus*.

5.2.2.4. Control Variable 'State of Health (subjective)'

If a respondent's state of health increases by 1 point on a scale from 1 to 5 their satisfaction of life deteriorates by 0.638 points on a scale from 1 to 10. It is important to note here again that 1 indicates a very good state of health and 5 a very poor state of health, not the other way around

(Haerpfer et al., 2020). This means that the poorer a respondent's state of health, the worse his or her satisfaction with life is.

When looking at the unstandardized coefficients, the estimate for feeling very close to your village, town or city goes down in model 2, which means without controlling for the state of health, the effect of feeling very close to your village, town or city on the satisfaction with life would be overestimated. Both explanatory variables however are significant and predict the outcome variable quality of life in the expected direction, meaning increasing the quality of life.

5.3. Analysis of the Quality of Life of National Citizens

In order to check for validity of the previous results, the analysis was run for citizens. This analysis also shows how much more or less the sense of community matters for citizens in comparison to forced migrants with regard to their quality of life.

5.3.1. Bias

First of all, when checking the assumptions of multiple linear regression analysis the assumption of multicollinearity was violated as the variance inflation factor (VIF) is above 10. This could be a cause for concern as this indicates a high correlation between the independent variables, so the effect of IV might be more difficult to estimate (Field, 2018). This should be kept in mind when looking at the results. However this could be explained by the main independent variables that have been changed to dummy variables that represent the categories of the explanatory variable.

Secondly, outliers were identified. More than 2 500 out of more than 66 000 cases had a standardized residual smaller than -2 or larger than 2, which could be potentially alarming cases (Field, 2018). These cases were filtered out and the analysis was run again. The results changed after filtering out these cases, meaning that they differed from the main pattern of the data (Field, 2018). The table in the following section presents the results of the analysis. Model 1 shows the linear regression without and model 2 with the control variable.

5.3.2. Interpretation of Results

5.3.2.1. Linear Regression Table

Table 1. Linear regression model of the quality of life of national citizens

	Model 1	Model 2
(Constant)	6.816*** (0.060)	8.682*** (0.060)
Sense of community = Very close	0.601*** (0.061)	0.410*** (0.057)
Sense of community = Close	0.364*** (0.061)	0.252*** (0.058)
Sense of community = Not very close	0.109 (0.065)	0.074 (0.061)
State of health (subjective)		-0.786*** (0.009)
R ²	0.007	0.119
Adj. R ²	0.007	0.119
N	63615	63615

Note: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in brackets.

***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, * p < 0.05

5.3.2.2. Formal Reporting and Interpretation

Someone feeling not very close to their village, town or city can be expected, on average, to be 0.074 points more satisfied with their life (on a 1-10 scale) than someone who does not feel close at all to their village, town or city, *ceteris paribus/ holding all other variables constant*. This difference is not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$).

Someone feeling close to their village, town or city can be expected, on average, to be 0.252 points more satisfied with their life (on a 1-10 scale) than someone who does not feel close at all to their village, town or city, *ceteris paribus/ holding all other variables constant*. This difference is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

Someone feeling very close to their village, town or city can be expected, on average, to be 0.410 points more satisfied with their life (on a 1-10 scale) than someone who does not feel close at all to

their village, town or city, *ceteris paribus/ holding all other variables constant*. This difference is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

Overall this analysis shows that a sense of community also increases the quality of life of national citizens especially in comparison to those that do not have a sense of community at all. In comparison to the previous analysis, there is a larger difference between someone feeling very close and someone feeling close to their village, town or city. This means that the hypothesis also applies to national citizens: the stronger the sense of community the better the quality of life.

When comparing the unstandardized coefficients of both analysis, the unstandardized coefficients in the analysis run for non-citizens are slightly higher. This indicates that the sense of community improves the quality of life of forced migrants a little bit more than the quality of life of national citizens. However, overall the results of national citizens do not differ drastically from those of forced migrants (non-citizens).

6. Conclusion

The research for this thesis answers the question: “What is the effect of the sense of community on the quality of life of forced migrants?”. Through a quantitative statistical method using linear regression, the results show that having a sense of community increases the quality of life of forced migrants. The hypothesis that the stronger the sense of community, the better the quality of life of forced migrants in the host country, barely holds but it can be confirmed.. Other researchers have found similar results, that a sense of community between forced migrants and the host community is beneficial (Hovil & Lomo, 2015; Diaconu et al., 2016)

The main limitations for this research lie mainly in the data set and selecting the cases through the criterion of citizenship, as pointed out. Another shortcoming is that the analysis was not run for a specific geographical area which does not take into account the geographical and cultural contexts. In comparison to other researchers that used a field study in a specific geographical area, it was not possible to take cultural sensitivities into account and actually observe real life effects of the sense of community of forced migrants with the host community (Hovil & Lomo, 2015; Abu-Zahra et al., 2019).

Further research could focus on how the sense of community between forced migrants and their host community could be achieved. What are ways in which forced migrants and the host community could benefit from each other? How can trust be built between forced migrants and the host community? The implementation would be quite challenging due to cultural differences and skepticism towards migrants and refugees. Nevertheless, it becomes more and more important to integrate forced migrants into society, give them a sense of belonging and help them build a life (Hovil & Lomo, 2015). Due to climate change which causes natural disasters and lack of resources, it is not always possible for forced migrants to return to their home country (Becker & Ferrera, 2019).

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