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Flourishing within the working-aged Finnish population

Introduction

We are living within ever more individualistic societies (Santos, Varnum, Grossmann 2017). At the same time, interest in happiness and wellness has increased in recent years and decades, as evidenced by everyday life debates. Debate on different aspects of subjective feelings are waged differently. For example, from 2010 to 2017, Google search hits for words of “happiness” and “flourishing” have increased approximately 30-fold. More scientific terms, such as “subjective well-being” and “life satisfaction,” have increased the visibility only 3- to 4-fold. The term “quality of life” rests between these terms, with a 17-fold increase in search hits. On average, the number of hits in the phrases mentioned above has doubled every year since 2000. Notably, two phrases dominate the search engine results: “quality of life” and “happiness,” with 20 to 50 times more results than other phrases noted earlier. These concepts, especially in the general debate, encompass the other concepts discussed here; thus, their weight grows in such searches. This increase in hits tell us about peoples’ increasing interest in those issues.

Google Scholar and Books for Searches can target this search slightly more accurately for academic research. The results look mostly like those of the general search: “quality of life” and “happiness” appear in scientific publications more frequently than other phrases. The term “quality of life” was found 1.7 million times in the search targeted to the years 1/2004-6/2017; “happiness” appears 0.7 million times; “life satisfaction” appears 270 thousand times; “flourishing” appears 113 thousand times; and “subjective well being” appears only 74 thousand times. In recent years (2016-17), the most widely used words have become entrenched, while the number of publications of less-used words has increased (See <https://scholar.google.com/>, Appendix 1). According to Veenhoven (2015) positive psychology has boosted happiness studies from year 2000. This result shows us that many concepts are used and that some newcomers are coming to field.

Flourishing is a relatively new concept but is based on the ancient Greek philosophical idea of the virtuous life. Nascent roots of the concept of flourishing can be found in positive psychology and the idea that a person can affect his or her own life, including thinking of positive things and thinking of fewer unfavorable things in their lives. Positive thinking, social networking, and a meaningful life will guide our lives in the right direction (See Seligman 2011; Momtach et al. 2016). The earlier measures of our experiential well-being were seen more as indicators of our life: how people live in different surroundings and how they evaluate them.

The concept of "flourishing" has not been used much in empirical studies before. The concept has not been compared to other similar concepts, but it should be, so that we can understand the differences and

similarities between them. Therefore, it is necessary to look at these concepts in the same article, and in relation to the ages of the people in question. Age is one of the key background variables used in different research traditions. Differences in well-being between different age groups and within different ages have been considered abundantly. To our knowledge, people's flourishing at different ages has not previously been statistically studied in Finland. In this cross-sectional study, we can compare the level of well-being in different age groups. Therefore, the aim of this article is to answer to the following questions: 1) what is the level of flourishing in different age-groups, 2) how does flourishing relate to living circumstances, and 3) how does flourishing relate to other measures of happiness and subjective well-being?

Background

Empirical measurements of well-being came about one hundred years after researchers in the UK and in the United States became interested in surveys of poorer and migrant life situations (Moser & Kalton, 1985, 6-11, see Thomas & Znanieck, 1974). Research on poverty in London was conducted via quantitative methods. As statistical social research evolved during the first half of the century, its broader means of using welfare research became more extensive (Mäkelä, 1996).

The history of statistical welfare research is central to the development of 'social indicators'. This research focuses on measuring the quality of life of people: how well do people live, and in what direction are their lives going (Veenhoven, 1996, 2). In the 1950s and 1960s, the UN expert groups considered the standard of living to consist of several components (Koskiahio, 1969, 25). At the end of the 1960s, Sten Johansson (1970) suggested politicians should look at the resources that people can use to influence their living conditions. In the 1960s, subjective well-being and objective quality of life were separated. Separation has also been a pragmatic matter, in terms of understanding how satisfied people have been with government programs and services as well as in different regions, institutions etc. (Headey & Wearing, 1992, 25; Andrews & Withey 1976). Allardt (1976) sought to incorporate quality of life into his famous viewpoint of well-being, as well as the needs, resources, and perspective of the subjective and objective sides of well-being. In the simplest terms, well-being is a measure of life satisfaction and happiness (See Kainulainen, 1998).

This development means, in fact, that there are many similar concepts: quality of life, perceived well-being, life satisfaction, and happiness, as well as flourishing. Many concepts are even overlapping, and overall well-being and quality of life are roughly synonymous with each other, as Michalos and colleagues (2011) have noted. On the other hand, quality of life is also close to the concept of sense of coherence (Eriksson & Lindström, 2007). Diener (2005) combines all the individual subjective evaluations under the concept of subjective well-being.

In the international research literature, not to mention everyday usage, the term *happiness* has many meanings. To some, happiness means more emotional positive feelings; to others, cognitive overall satisfaction with life. In their article in World Happiness Report 2017 Helliwell, Huang and Wang (2017) go through various indicators in assessing the best way to describe the happiness of the population at the global level. They justify the choice of the Cantril's Ladder (Cantril 1965), not only with its prevalence but also by the fact that life evaluations produce quite similar results than indicators of emotionality. The fact

that the Classical Greek word 'eudaimonia' literally means 'good daimons', which is usually translated as 'happiness' in English (Michalos 2015), underlines the conceptual lack of clarity.

Because of the multiple and inappropriate concepts within this field, positive psychologists defined a new one. The concept of flourishing is intended to overcome some missing parts of earlier theories on well-being. According to Seligman (2011), happiness was already used in so many contexts that its meaning was not very obvious. For this reason, he and other representatives of positive psychology sought conceptual focus. Authentic happiness categorized happiness into three dimensions: positive emotions, engagement and meaning. Later, Seligman developed the theory of authentic happiness (whose main goal was life satisfaction) in the theory of well-being, whose elements were composed of five prosperity factors (PERMA model): positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships and accomplishment or achievement. These elements are the key components of flourishing.

Some years before Seligman, Ryff (1989) defined six basic dimensions of psychological well-being: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. According to Keyes (2002, 209), the dimensions of social well-being are social coherence, social actualization, social integration, social acceptance, and social contribution. Emotional well-being is “a cluster of symptoms reflecting the presence or absence of positive feelings about life”.

The background of flourishing is in well-being and happiness research, but there is also a strong connection to mental health. Flourishing can be seen as the opposite of languishing, and separate (but overlapping) dimensions of mental illness. Mental health has been studied and seen through its negative side: the absence of mental problems. In recent decades, there has been an increased interest in the positive side of mental health. Keyes and Westerhof (2012), among others, define mental health positively “as the presence of emotional well-being in combination with high levels of psychological and social functioning”. The concept of flourishing is quite close to WHO’s current definition of mental health: *Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.*

According to Keyes and Westerhof (2012, 67), depression may decrease and good mental health may increase around certain ages in one’s life. The researchers also found that flourishing decreases in later life, reaching its highest point when an individual reaches their fifties. Depressive symptoms are at their highest before an individual’s forties and decline slightly thereafter. Both negative and positive sides of mental health should be taken into account, as the absence of negative aspects, such as mental disorders, does not automatically suggest a rise in positive ones. Recent studies have shown that promoting positive aspects (flourishing) even reduce the risk of mental illness (Keyes & Westerhof, 2012, 72).

Positive feelings are seen as a catalyst for opening up the possibility of using one’s talents and seeing opportunities in society. In other words, feelings are linked to terms of social and psychological capital, which are beneficial to both social and human functioning as Diener et al. (2010) has cited in Putnam (2000) and Csikszentmihalyi (1990). They underline the importance of different kinds of connections within human networks, and commitment to reaching one’s aims. Interpersonal connections have also been found to be important to the psychological well-being of an individual, including the point that giving to others increases health more than receiving from them.

Hone et al. (2014) have analyzed four modern concepts of flourishing. These definitions have both shared as well as separate elements. In most of the concepts there exist components like engagement, purpose and/or meaning, positive emotions, competence, self-esteem and optimism describing the elements of flourishing. Keyes (2002) underpinned theories of emotional, psychological and social wellbeing. Flourishing *is associated with superior physical, psychological, and psychosocial functioning* (Keyes, 2005). Flourishing was to Huppert & So (2013) as a mirror of symptoms of *mental illnesses*. They found three elements of flourishing: positive characteristics, positive functioning and positive appraisal. Flourishing “is the combination of feeling good and functioning effectively”. To Seligman (2012) flourishing is “*a gold-standard of wellbeing*”. Diener (2010) combined the ideas of positive psychology and the theory of human well-being. He composed eight factors for psychological flourishing in his Flourishing Scale. His views are based, inter alia, on the theories of humanistic psychology (e.g., Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 1998; Ryan & Deci, 2000), social capital and social psychological capital (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) objectives and meanings (e.g., Seligman, 2002).

All in all, the insights of the researchers' experiences of people and the indicators that describe them correlate strongly with one another. Quality of life is based on objective and subjective factors. Understanding well-being reflects reactions to external factors and events, taking into account the goals set by man himself. Life satisfaction can be mapped out by a single question or by focusing on different areas of life. The general question of life satisfaction can also be seen as a measure of happiness. Psychological growth, on the other hand, emphasizes the significance of one's own goals, and one's own actions, as parts of the surrounding environment. The influence of human factors on the world of human experience has been conceptually shifted to look at the impact of the human experience world on one's own life in the future. The object has become a subject. The concept of flourishing is also a built-in idea that depicts an active human future and psychological aspirations. Instead, quality of life, perceived well-being and happiness are seen more as the influence of external factors on the individual's world of experience.

In this study, we see flourishing in the light of the development of ideas of wellbeing. Flourishing is closely related with other concepts describing a good life. It adds new elements to old ones, while giving more space to psychological aspects, as well as societal aspects, of a good life. These new conceptual perspectives underline the need to chart the fluctuation of flourishing in different contexts and relationships: How do we succeed in our lives (especially in working life), what are our social relationships, and how functional we are? When analyzing these circumstances regarding working age people and in different age groups it is possible to compare – knowing the limits of a cross-sectional survey - the strength of (chronological) age and living circumstances.

Previous findings

Diener's Flourishing Scale correlates strongly with other subjective measures such as subjective well-being ($r=.59$), happiness (.42), life satisfaction (.42) and hedonic happiness (positive vs negative feelings, .51) (Baptista et al. 2016).

Former studies have shown that flourishing varies in different circumstances. According to Keyes (2002, 216) flourishing is more prevalent among males, older adults (>45 yrs), the highly educated, and married individuals. In addition, flourishing people report a smaller number of problems related to the common activities of living, and their emotional health is higher than in other groups (Keyes 2002, 214). It has also

been found that depression, both its symptoms and its diagnosis, is at its lowest among the middle-aged adults, and at its highest in young adults and the elderly (Keyes & Westerhof, 2012).

In different studies, flourishing seems to correlate with aging in different ways. In some cases, flourishing increases after middle age and declines in other ages. The results may differ due to differing settings and measurements. Flourishing is theoretically close to subjective health. We know health relates strongly to aging, especially in the later part of the life course. Aging brings rising health problems. Among Finnish men, self-rated health has different backgrounds in different phases of life: physical fitness predicts subjective health in their 30s, psychological well-being in their 50s and chronic diseases in their 70s (Jylhä et al. 1986)

Good statistical data on the Finnish course of life have allowed for demographic studies and, for example, the comparison of different age cohorts. Time series demonstrates the transformation of society and its connection to the lives of differently aged people. Although the major lines of the life course (training, transition to work, family creation, and retirement) have remained relatively similar, the different stages of the life course extends over the human life. For example, the duration of the training varies greatly both temporally and between individuals. The flow of life is influenced by individual characteristics and aspirations, as well as the structural and cultural-normative factors of society. (eg Martelin, Pitkänen & Koskinen 2000; Nurmi & Salmela-Aro 2000.) The life of a working-age population is largely governed by the relationship to working life. The main capital of working age is work ability. Work ability regulates who works and who does not. Employment rates fall after the age of 50, and only one-tenth reach the retirement age (65) while working. This tells us that working life sets the individual's characteristics under pressure. With aging, illnesses increase, but on the other hand, there is a mental growth that helps to cope with working life. Individual differences in working ability and employment will increase in the last decade of working life. (Ilmarinen, 2000.) Mental health problems emerge at a young age, but the prevalence of problems increases as the age increases due to chronic health issues. Changes related to working life and family life have been observed to reflect mental health. (Lehtinen 2000.)

Our main interest in this article is in the period of life when people mostly are working. We also know how important relationships are to our subjective well-being. According to the theory of flourishing, flourishing is closely linked with health, especially with psychological health. Therefore, it is important to take into account the relationships between flourishing and working life, human relationships, and health when evaluating the correlation between flourishing and aging.

Methods

The relationship between different subjective measures and age was examined by comparing the means of measuring different age groups visually. Means, standard deviations, and 95% confidence intervals of flourishing are shown for different age groups. Also, the correlations between flourishing and other measures were tested.

Analysis of variance was used in both selecting the promising predictors of flourishing (F-test) as well as in the main analysis. Predictors were added one-by-one in order to see how previous F-scores were influenced (or not) by new variables. After every (five) variables from the work category were in the model, all 2-way interactions between the variables were entered into the model. Then, all non-statistical

interactions were excluded. In the next phase, one variable describing the quality of human relations—feeling that one is beloved—was added to the model. All 2-way interactions between “love” and the other variables were added, and non-statistical interactions were excluded. In the last phase, an indicator for health was added using the same method as “love”. After adding all variables into one model, full-time working and early retirement lost their statistical significance on flourishing. The final model explained more than 36% of the total variance. The category of age group was also added in the last stage, but no statistical effect was found. Other variables were diminishing the prediction from age.

Sample

The survey was collected in 2012 for The Well-being and Social Cohesion in an Unequal Society (WEBE) project funded by the Finnish Academy. The sample was selected from the Population Register Center representing working-aged (20-64) Finnish speaking adults not living in institutions. The simple random sample was picked up by the Population Register Center. The data were gathered through a postal survey (with an additional possibility to answer electronically) with a sample size of 5000 individuals during spring 2012. The overall response rate was 38% (n = 1883), which is close to other population survey done at the same time (Airio 2013). In both of the studies, two notes were sent to those persons who had not answered yet. Eighty-five percent of the answers came through normal post, and 15% came through the Internet within the period of two months in the spring 2012. The data appeared to be relatively representative of the general population in terms of geographic, socioeconomic, and demographic distributions (Kainulainen, Saari & Veenhoven 2018). However, the addition of weighting (age and sex) corrected only slightly small demographic biases in representation. Therefore, unweighted data were used.

Table 1. Sample characteristics (N = 1883) compared to Finnish population.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Breakdown</i>	<i>Unweighted %</i>	<i>Weighted %</i>	<i>Population %</i>
Gender	Male	43.7	49.2	50.5
	Female	56.3	50.8	49.5
Age	20–24	6.2	11.7	10.7
	25–29	8.6	10.6	10.7
	30–34	8.4	10.0	10.8
	35–39	7.7	9.6	10.3
	40–44	8.6	9.8	10.2
	45–49	12.1	11.5	11.7
	50–54	12.7	11.6	11.6
	55–59	15.2	12.0	11.9
	60–65	22.1	15.0	12.2
Marital status	Married (registered)	51.6	47.1	46.1
	Cohabiting	17.9	19.8	

	Not married	17.5	22.5	40.2
	Divorced	10.8	9.1	12.3
	Widowed	2.2	1.6	1.3
Household	Single	21.9	21.7	21.5
	Single parent	3.8	3.6	4.8
	A pair without children	28.1	27.4	29.1
	A pair with children	41.0	39.6	33.7
	Living with parents	1.9	3.9	5.2
Education	Primary school	20.2	16.9	18.3
	Secondary school or Vocat.	48.9	52.2	47.4
	University or Polytechnic	29.9	31.1	34.2
Socio-economic Status	Student	6.5	9.4	6.9
	Retired	14.4	10.5	10.6
	Unemployed	7.6	7.5	7.9
	Blue-collar	33.7	34.9	21.1
	Lower white-collar	11.1	10.1	25.6
	Upper white-collar	15.0	14.8	14.3
	Entrepreneur	7.0	7.0	6.1
	Farmer	1.2	1.2	1.6
	Other	3.4	4.7	3.7

Measures

As described earlier, we can see that in theory, flourishing relates to a good life, subjective well-being, happiness and satisfaction with life. Different scales to measure people's own evaluations of their life were used in the WEBE study. This finding enabled us to compare the results to those of the Flourishing Scale (FS). All measures have their own backgrounds, meaning they all give their viewpoint on the issue, as well as their own choice of variants. All indicators were made comparable by rescaling them from zero (0) to one hundred (100). The new scale revealed the percentage from the maximum (see International Well-being Group 2013).

Five viewpoints on subjective evaluations by different age groups are compared in Figure 1. Three of the measures were single item indicators (overall satisfaction, hedonic level of affects, and happiness), and two were aggregates (FS and Personal Well-being Index [PWI]). Overall appreciation of one's life as a whole is a widely used measure of *life satisfaction*: "Taken all together, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your life as a whole these days?" (response options ranged from 0 dissatisfied to 10 satisfied). *Hedonic level of affect* was taken by asking "How pleasant or unpleasant do you feel most of the time these days?" (response options ranged from 0 most of time unpleasant to 10 most of time pleasant) (Veenhoven, 2009). *Happiness level* was taken by asking "How often have you felt happy during the last 12 months?" (response options ranged from 1 never to 5 all the time). The *PWI* for adults is based on eight items covering the main domains of life (scale 0-100) (see background Cummins et al., 2003). The *FS* is based on eight items covering the relevant aspects of psychological well-being (scale 8-56) (Diener et al., 2010).

Diener and others (2010) combined the ideas from Seligman's PERMA model (2002) and the ideas of Deci and Ryan (2000) and Carol Ryff (1995) to formulate a short Scale of *Flourishing*. The FS consists of eight statements with seven variants to choose from (1 strongly disagree to 7 strongly agree): "I lead a purposeful and meaningful life", "My social relationships are supportive and rewarding", "I am engaged and interested in my daily activities", "I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others", "I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me", "I am a good person and live a good life", "I am optimistic about my future" and "People respect me". Scores ranged from 8 to 56, with higher scores signifying a higher level of flourishing. This was the first time FS was used with students. Therefore, it was possible to analyze how the FS measure behaves within the group of working-aged people. We compared these groups using factor analysis and calculating Cronbach's Alphas. Factor analysis was made using a principal axis method. There was only one strong factor with an eigenvalue of 4.58, accounting for 57% of the variance in the items. The factor loadings range was from .68 to .81. Compared to the original factor analysis, the result was almost the same (4.24; 53%; .61 to .77). The mean of the final FS was 40.81, the standard deviation was 8.68, and the Cronbach's Alpha was .892. The general mean of the scale was therefore lower than in the original student samples, while the standard deviation was higher. The Cronbach's Alpha was high in both samples.

All variables that were proposed to relate with flourishing are listed in Table 3. A total of 14 variables were used to analyze flourishing in working life, 13 variables described relationships, and nine variables described health. In the first phase, we found the highest F-values, showing the strongest correlations between flourishing and the variables. Thereafter, selected variables were added to the model one by one. In the last phase, the following variables were in the analysis.

The variables covering *working life* were as follows: socioeconomic status (SES), and different experiences during the last 12 months related to working life (6 items; coded 0 or 1). The experience of full-time work (>35 h per week) was obtained by asking "Remember your life during the last 12 months. Which of the following situations have you experienced during the last 12 months? (Circulate all relevant experiences)." Fourteen options were listed, including working full-time as well as retirement for reasons other than age.

Capabilities were measured by the question "In each case, please say whether you strongly agree (10) or strongly disagree (0)" with statements such as "I am able to use my talents and skills at work" and "I have good opportunities to socialise at work", among others developed in The Capabilities Measurement Project (2012) by Anand et al.

Material resources were investigated via one item from the PWI for Adults (see International Well-being Group 2006) by asking: "How satisfied are you with your standard of living?" Response options ranged from 0 (completely dissatisfied) to 10 (completely satisfied). *Feelings of love* were obtained by asking: "How often you have felt (love for) yourself during the last 12 months...", along with questions regarding being in love and being loved. The options for both items were never, very seldom, sometimes, quite often, and continuously.

Usual activities is a self-evaluation measure of how one manages in his or her everyday life. The measure was part of the OXWELL survey (see capabilities above). An evaluation of usual activities was achieved by asking subjects to "Please indicate which statement best describe your own health state today". One item was usual activities, and the following options were available: 1 "I have no problems performing my usual activities", 2 "I have some problems performing my usual activities", and 3 "I am unable to perform my usual activities".

Results

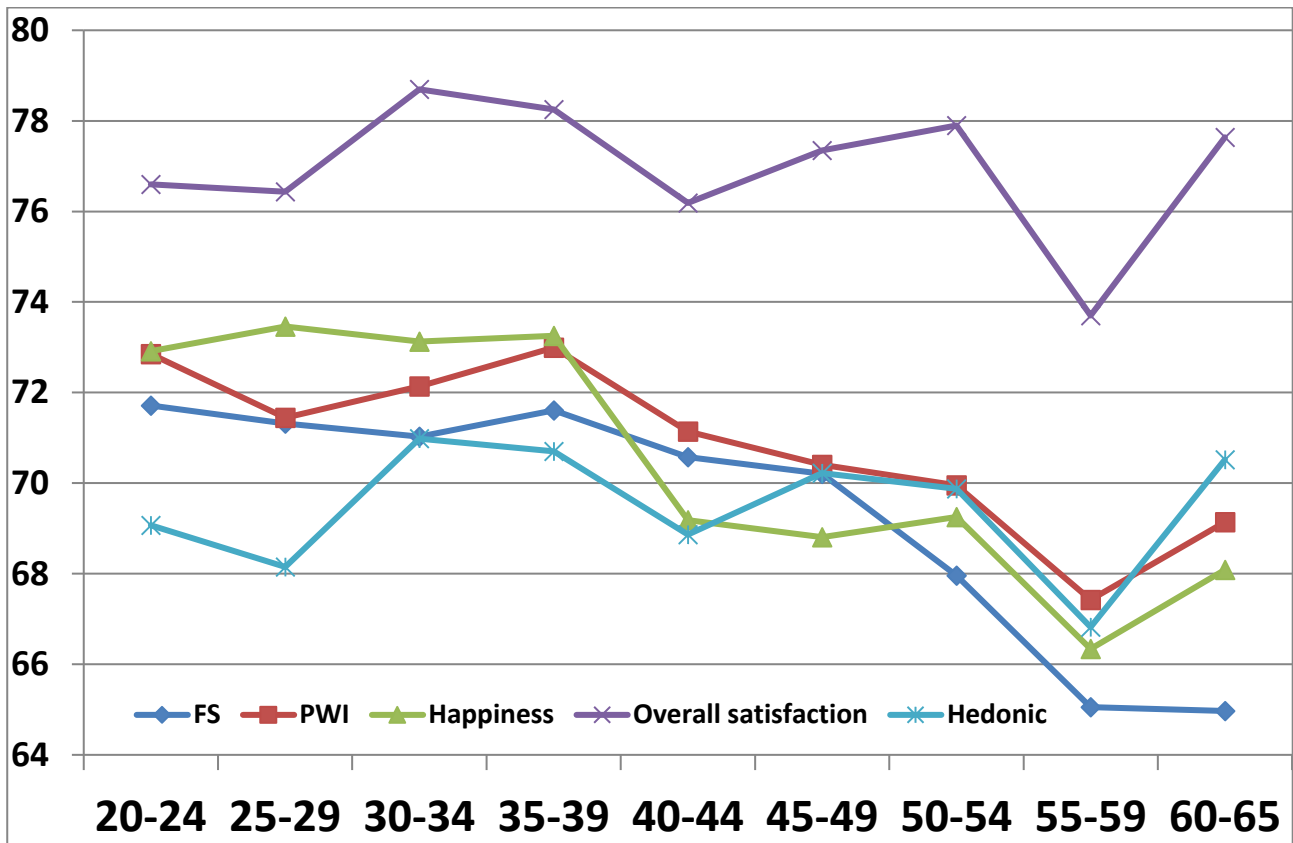


Figure 1. Flourishing Scale (FS), Personal Well-being Index (PWI), Happiness, Overall satisfaction and Hedonic level of affect by age-groups.

The profiles of different measurements seem to be identical. This indicates measurements that are empirically overlapping each other, more or less. Flourishing correlates strongly with other measurements: PWI ($r=.677$), Happiness (.539), Overall satisfaction (.637) and Hedonic level of affect (.614). Correlations are at the same level. The strongest associations are between Overall satisfaction and Hedonic level of affect (.731), and Overall satisfaction and PWI (.724). Interestingly, the correlations between flourishing and other wellbeing measures are higher than the correlations between FS and the three other measures of flourishing ($r=.44-.59$; Hone et al. 2014).

Figure 1 shows some differences, as well as similarities, between the indicators. The first notion is that the level of one indicator is clearly higher than the others, which have generally similar profiles. Overall satisfaction, in terms of one’s life as a whole, shows higher scores than others. Another important notion is that all of the indicators show lower scores from those aged 50 to 60 years, and higher scores for those younger than that age range. The third notion is that a decreasing tendency in indicators throughout the

subjects' life-course is indicated. However, the changes within all indicators are mild, and the assessment of one's life is only some percent lower when people are reaching the age for retirement than when they are starting their career.

Overall appreciation of one's life as a whole (satisfaction) at the highest level varies from 74 to 79. The lowest point is at approximately 57 years, the same point measured by other instruments. The most appreciative stage in our lives occurs just after our thirties. The results are roughly in line with previous representative surveys; the general quality of life stays at quite a high level until the eighties, but slightly declines with age. Using the WHO Quality of Life-BREF (WHOQOL-BREF) measure (response options ranged from 0-100), scores at ages 18-24 are slightly over 80 points and approximately 76 points between the ages of 60-69 (Vaarama et al. 2010, 132).

All instruments other than overall satisfaction were found to be approximately 5 points lower. Other indicators followed each other in different age groups, such that people under 40 years seem to be the best in terms of subjective well-being. Within the age groups older than 40 years indicators of subjective well-being decrease from 72 to 67 around the age of 57. Within the next five years, the mean scores increase. There are two exceptions to these results: hedonic level of affect is clearly lower in young adulthood (>30 yrs) than other indicators, and flourishing is the only indicator that does not increase in the oldest age group. On closer inspection, it can be recognized that the profiles of the hedonic level of affect and satisfaction with life as a whole are similar or identical.

Table 2. Flourishing by age groups (scale 8-56).

Age group	Mean	Std. error	95% Confidence interval	
			Lower bound	Upper bound
20-24	42.423	.873	40.711	44.134
25-29	42.233	.711	40.838	43.628
30-34	42.093	.677	40.765	43.422
35-39	42.371	.719	40.961	43.780
40-44	41.875	.679	40.542	43.208
45-49	41.700	.570	40.582	42.819
50-54	40.622	.557	39.529	41.714
55-59	39.226	.511	38.224	40.228
60-65	39.185	.424	38.354	40.016

Flourishing seems to correlate with several items of working life, personal connections, and abilities to act. All items in the WEBE survey related to these three dimensions were analyzed. F-tests are shown in table 3. Some items did not have any statistical relationship with flourishing, such as other types of work (half- and part-time employment), and normal retirement based on age or years at work. The strongest connections to flourishing were full-time work, the opportunity to use one's own capacity at work, the opportunity to socialize at work (increasing), and earlier retirement than normal (decreasing). Standard of living also correlates (positively) with flourishing. The role of work is important to working-aged people (Kainulainen 2016).

Qualitative aspects of human relations seem to be more important than quantitative ones. The amount of people around us, the division of labor at home, troubles in previous relationships, and even the structure of the household are not as important as feelings between people. The strongest ties with flourishing are shown to be in those who feel themselves beloved, whose personal relationships are functioning well, and who fall in love (increasingly).

According to the theory of flourishing, this status is very closely related to mental health. Therefore, it was no surprise that anxiety or depression co-vary with flourishing more strongly than other indicators of health. Physical and mental problems experienced throughout one's life have a negative correlation with flourishing, but not to the extent that anxiety or depression, usual activities, and pain or discomfort do. Feelings of depression and discomfort are theoretically the opposite of flourishing, and it is therefore better to determine a more objective indicator for health. Therefore, usual activities were chosen as the indicators of health.

Table 3. Relationship between flourishing and working life, human relationships, and health.

	F	Sig.
WORKING LIFE		
Socioeconomic status	19.326	.000
Experience of (within last 12 months)...		
Full-time work (> 35 h per week)	83.517	.000
Retirement for reasons other than age	76.411	.000
Unemployed	15.438	.000
Permanently employed	10.515	.001
Entrepreneur	5.464	.020
Periodically employed	4.685	.031
Able to use talents and skills at work	53.628	.000
Good opportunities to socialize at work	37.282	.000
Able to find work when required	28.876	.000
Always treated as an equal (and not discriminated against) by people at work	28.345	.000
Good opportunities for promotion or recognition at work	24.587	.000
Able to work under a good manager at the moment	16.472	.000
Satisfied with standard of living	43.112	.000
RELATIONSHIPS		
To be loved (feeling of)	111.730	.000
Satisfied with personal human relations	76.800	.000
Being in love	46.875	.000
Able to achieve a good work-life balance	29.373	.000
Parental leave experience (last year)	26.337	.000
Able to socialize with others in family as would wish	24.383	.000
Structure of family	19.349	.000
Number of children under 7 at home	18.672	.000
To be without care when needed	16.317	.000
Number of adults at home	13.001	.000

Able to share domestic tasks within the household fairly	9.339	.000
Troubled divorce	5.509	.000
Number of children 7-17 yrs at home	4.426	.004
HEALTH		
Anxiety/depression	164.117	.000
Usual activities	82.799	.000
Pain/discomfort	67.581	.000
Satisfied with health	45.254	.000
Mobility	39.002	.000
Self-care	34.894	.000
Disability	13.199	.000
Severe mental problem	10.945	.000
Severe physical illness	5.132	.000

Predictors of flourishing were analyzed step-by-step in the following way. Some recodes were done in order to reduce the number of categories. All variables with large scales were recoded as dummies. Eighty (8) or more points were coded as 2, and all other scores, including missing cases, as 1. Satisfaction with standard of living, able to use talents and skills at work, and good opportunities to socialize at work were recoded. Managing the usual activities originally had three options, but the third option had only seven cases. Variables recoded as dummies had two categories: no problems at all and some problems. The last variable had only 44 cases wherein it was reported that the respondents had never had a feeling of being beloved. These cases were added to the category in which respondents only rarely had such a feeling within the last 12 months.

The strongest associations between flourishing and other items were the following: standard of living, ability to use skills and talents at work, and the feeling of being loved. Ability to manage in usual activities and the possibility to socialize at work correlated with flourishing as well. The factors of the standard of living and possibility of socializing at work interacted.

Table 4. Model predicting flourishing.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta squared
Corrected model	47439.813a	8	5929.977	130.441	.000	.366
Intercept	731592.642	1	731592.642	16092.704	.000	.899
Skills and talents	3504.056	1	3504.056	77.078	.000	.041
Socialize at work	902.885	1	902.885	19.861	.000	.011
Standard of living	3920.282	1	3920.282	86.234	.000	.045
Standard of living * socialize at work	771.064	1	771.064	16.961	.000	.009
Person feels beloved	10407.572	3	3469.191	76.311	.000	.112
Usual activities	1933.650	1	1933.650	42.534	.000	.023
Error	82330.121	1811	45.461			

Total	3176084.000	1820
Corrected total	129769.934	1819

a R Squared = .366 (Adjusted R Squared = .363)

The mean scores of flourishing in different categories of predictors are reported in table 5. Those respondents who reported high satisfaction with their standard of living, the ability to use their own capacity, being able to socialize at work, having minor problems in everyday activities, and having a continuous feeling of being loved had significantly higher scores in flourishing. The biggest differences can be seen between those who never or only rarely feel beloved, compared to those who feel beloved all the time. Obvious differences were also seen between those who have no clear ability to use their own skills, and had some problems compared to those with challenging work and without problems in their capability. Other differences were milder. One interaction was found between standard of living and socializing at work. No big differences between the amount of socializing at work and flourishing were recognized if one had a high standard of living. In contrast, a low standard of living indicated that socializing at work had a stronger connection with flourishing.

Table 5. Flourishing in different social contexts.

	Mean	Std. error	95% Confidence interval	
			Lower bound	Upper bound
Satisfied with standard of living				
0-70	36.772	.318	36.149	37.396
80-100	39.975	.376	39.238	40.713
Able to use talents and skills at work				
0-7	36.618	.347	35.937	37.299
8-10	40.130	.377	39.390	40.870
Good opportunities to socialize at work				
0-7	37.481	.366	36.764	38.198
8-10	39.267	.360	38.561	39.973
Usual activities				
No problems	40.303	.200	39.911	40.695
Some or more problems	36.445	.564	35.339	37.551
To be loved (feeling of)				
Never or rarely	33.662	.554	32.575	34.749
Sometimes	37.522	.417	36.704	38.340
Quite often	39.884	.358	39.181	40.587
Continuously	42.428	.415	41.614	43.241

Satisfied with standard of living

Good opportunities to socialize at work

0-70	0-7	35.195	.383	34.443	35.946
	8-10	38.350	.417	37.532	39.168
80-100	0-7	39.767	.506	38.775	40.759
	8-10	40.184	.424	39.353	41.015

Conclusions

A review of studies on flourishing has revealed that flourishing is high in students as well as those in the later stages of their lives. However, the relationship between age and flourishing is not clear. We based our analysis on the notion that flourishing seems to be at a lower level after middle age. This result was statistically supported. During the period of working age, flourishing declines almost in every age group, but the decline is relatively small. The declining profile of flourishing is close to other indicators of subjective well-being. To examine these differences between age groups within the period of working age deeper, we explored the associations with other relevant spheres of life, working, human relations, and health, on flourishing.

Many studies, including ours, support the result that the level of flourishing varies in different phases of our lives. However, the correlation between flourishing and other aspects of life seems to be based more on social activities (social age) than chronological age. Roles, tasks, and duties are altered in different phases of our life course. According to earlier findings and our results, social issues relate to different stages of life and have a stronger association with flourishing than age itself. Using five selected indicators, we managed to explain about one third of the variance of flourishing. The age of respondents did not statistically explain the variance of flourishing. We have to keep in mind that our cross-sectional survey does not describe ageing as such. Therefore, we do not know if our results would continue to be valid over the course of a subject's life. We have analyzed the differences of subjective well-being in age categories and selected the best predictors of flourishing within working-aged Finns. Cross-sectional studies have other problems as well. One of the biggest is that we do not have an exact understanding of the selectivity processes of people with different characters during their life-time. Therefore, we cannot say anything about the causal effect of flourishing on an individual's later life (studying, working, relations etc.). Because of this limitation, interesting questions on the true or deepest nature of flourishing – whether it is more personally or socially constructed - cannot be answered. Follow-up designs are needed to answer these questions.

It should also be considered that, within the cross-sectional material, it is not possible to distinguish between the effects of age, period and age-cohort (APC). Consequently, the conclusions of this study remain uncertain as regards to the relationship between age and other factors linked to the societal situation in 2012, or whether the differences between the age groups result from the fact that the younger ones were born in the deepest moments of the recession of the 1990s, while the elders were born in the 1950s. Nevertheless, the fact that the differences between the age groups were rather moderate in all aspects of the perceived well-being, support the view that age means more than cohort. Also, the time-period of investigation does not seem to be specific, as the levels of well-being experienced correspond to their previous results on the level of well-being of the Finns. There is still a hypothesis that human age has a connection with well-being, although the connection is very small.

How are the results linked to earlier findings that mental health or flourishing consists of three distinct dimensions? According to the theory of flourishing, mental health requires good emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Our results show us that flourishing co-varies clearly with other indicators of subjective well-being, such as personal well-being (the cognitive component of subjective well-being) and emotions (hedonic well-being: pleasure attainment and pain avoidance). The analysis herein underlined the importance of valuable social ties, as well as the possibility of self-expression, capabilities (health), and resources (sufficient income and wealth). The analysis also showed which issues are not particularly important to flourishing. Full-time work and retirement for reasons other than aging did not predict flourishing when taking into account other aspects of work. In terms of work, the content – meaning of work - is more important than the work itself. Good friends in the workplace and using one's own talents in tasks results in greater satisfaction than having permanent, full-time work. Looking at the statistically most predictive issues in our analysis, we may conclude that the absence of mental illness, having loving people around us, and having pleasurable activities are the key components of flourishing at every age.

How are other subjective indicators of well-being linked with flourishing? As found earlier, subjective indicators correlate with each other strongly, but it seems they all have their own focus and do not explain all of each other's variance. The profiles of different subjective indicators were quite similar within working-aged Finns. Some profiles were almost identical. One explanation of the similarities in the profiles of overall satisfaction and hedonic level of affect is that according to Veenhoven's theory of happiness, hedonic level of affect is one of the two sources of happiness (Kainulainen, Saari & Veenhoven, 2017). The other issue that ties these two phenomena together and may explain similarities is their relationship to time. In both questions, the focus was on "these days", whereas for the happiness question, the focus was on last year, and PWI and FS did not examine time.

We learned that Ed Diener's Flourishing Scale has almost the same structure within the Finnish working-age population that it has within the population of students in the USA. The Flourishing Scale seems to measure personal characters more than others that use subjective indicators. The FS gives a different aspect of subjective well-being, which is more related to our inner lives than to the circumstances around us. More analysis should be done to discover if other subjective indicators used here are predicted with the same predictors as flourishing.

Declining rates of subjective well-being were seen in older age groups within the period of working age, but the differences were not big. This finding indicates that aging as such does not substantially reduce our overall happiness. Different living circumstances does. Human relations do. Opportunities to use our skills do. Being part of society does. These findings suggest that decision makers should make certain choices regarding the goals of society.

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Appendix 1. Google scholar-search (in thousand).

	2004- 2017	2004- 2009	2010- 2015	2016- 2017
Quality of Life	1700	1680	1420	189
Subjective Wellbeing	74	21	29	28
Life satisfaction	269	49	82	39

Happiness	719	152	288	69
Flourishing	113	62	60	29
	2875	1964	1879	354