



## Study of women's flourishing rate and some related factors, Sanandaj, Iran, 2016

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### Original Article

#### Abstract

**BACKGROUND:** Flourishing is a component of positive psychology. This refers to a type of life with permanent optimism in human functions, and implicitly refers to goodness, growth, and flexibility. The present study was carried out to evaluate women's flourishing rate and some related factors in Sanandaj, Iran, in 2016.

**METHODS:** This was a cross-sectional study on women aged between 18 to 64 years in Sanandaj City, Iran, that 400 of them were selected randomly. The data collection tool was flourishing questionnaire including 8 items. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS software and chi-square, t, and analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests.

**RESULTS:** The highest average score ( $6.05 \pm 1.19$ ) referred to "I am deeply about the happiness of the others" and the lowest average score ( $4.57 \pm 1.89$ ) referred to "I enjoy my daily activities". There was a statistically significant difference between flourishing rate of subjects and their level of education ( $P = 0.04$ ) as well as maternal education ( $P = 0.001$ ).

**CONCLUSION:** Considering the relation between the education and the flourishing rate, training classes in the field of mental health and flourishing for women is suggested.

**KEYWORDS:** Positive Reinforcement, Educational Status, Happiness

*Date of submission:* 22 July 2017, *Date of acceptance:* 17 Sep. 2017

**Citation:** Vahabi A, Vahabi B, Sayyad S, Moradi M, Sayyadi M, Fakhri M. **Study of women's flourishing rate and some related factors, Sanandaj, Iran, 2016.** Chron Dis J 2018; 6(3): 108-12.

### Introduction

In recent years, positive psychology focuses on the positive aspects of human spirit rather than focusing on the extent of their mental disorders and their effects on human health. In this kind of psychology, concepts of goodness, generosity, growth, resilience, and well-being represent the positive dimension of man.<sup>1,2</sup> Flourishing is a constitutive part of positive psychology that refers to a kind of life associated with persistent optimism in human functions, and indirectly implies well-being,

generosity, growth, and flexibility.<sup>3</sup> The meaning of flourishing is in contradiction to the meaning of wilt and depression. Keyes did not accept mental health as not having mental illness, but he considered it as a distinct positive feeling and positive action.<sup>4</sup> According to Keyes, flourishing is the mental life of adults who have high levels of emotional well-being. They are happy and satisfied, have a tendency to purposeful life, accept all their qualities, feel autonomy and independency, have internal control power, and decide on their destiny.<sup>5</sup> In recent years, different theories have been made about flourishing; each of them considers varied variables as the basis of human well-

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being and flourishing. Humanistic theories have argued that man has many universal psychological needs, including the need for merit, relationships, and self-sufficiency. These requirements are all measurable by the degree of individual flourishing.<sup>6-8</sup>

In addition, there are new discoveries about well-being. In this context, Putnam and Helliwell et al. considered the social network as the foundation of well-being.<sup>9,10</sup> Some people also describe enthusiasm, interest in activities with enthusiasm, as well-known underpinnings of well-being as the basis for their friends' network.<sup>11</sup> In recent years, extensive researches have been done in the field of welfare, and variables correlated with well-being have referred to different dimensions of flourishing and have considered purposefulness and meaningfulness as fundamental building blocks in human performance.<sup>6,7,12,13</sup> Researchers believe that one of the reasons for the study of flourishing is getting aware of wilt and depression.<sup>14</sup>

Keyes says that 14 percent of adults become depressed annually, causing the destruction of social roles, absenteeism from work, reduced fertility, increased care costs, suicide, and more referral to the physician; but flourishing increases attention, sets thought-action, and guides the scope of insight and creativity in a useful direction.<sup>5,15</sup> The various studies have shown that flourishing plays an important role in academic achievement, level of individuals' happiness, and their social competency.<sup>16-18</sup> For example, in one of these studies, it was argued that flourishing had an effective role in relationship between social competency and psychological vulnerability.<sup>18</sup> In another study, it was revealed that self-efficacy and self-esteem had an important role in spiritual health of the surveyed patients,<sup>19</sup> and these factors can play an effective role in flourishing of the patients.

Given the important role of women in mental health of family and their important

role in development of children with complete physical, mental, and psychological well-being, and since there was not any study in this field in Iran, revealing the state of flourishing among women and considering the important role of flourishing in reducing depression, this study was designed and evaluated to determine the women's flourishing rate and some related factors in Sanandaj, Iran, in 2016.

### Materials and Methods

This was a descriptive-analytical study. The population was women in Sanandaj with the age range of 18 to 64 years. The sample size was calculated as follows: given that there was no available information in this field, the following formula was used to estimate the sample size. To estimate the sample size, the values of  $p$  and  $d$  in the following formula were considered as 0.5 and 0.05, respectively. Thus, the minimum number of subjects to do this study was 384. Finally, 400 women were examined as the final sample.

$$N = (z^2 \times pq) / d^2$$

The method of the study was a multi-stage cluster. In the first stage, Sanandaj city was divided into 5 parts: north, south, east, west, and center. Then, in each part, several neighborhoods were selected randomly, and finally in each neighborhood, some homes were selected randomly. Data were collected using a home-based interview.

In this study, the Persian version of flourishing questionnaire was used. This questionnaire was used by Moradi Siah Afshadi et al. Its validity and reliability were confirmed in that study and its Cronbach's alpha value was 0.82.<sup>16</sup> In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was 0.79. The questionnaire had 8 items. The scoring was based on a 7-point Likert scale from 1, meaning totally disagree, to 7 meaning totally agree. Earning a higher score on the whole of the surveyed

questions indicated a higher degree of flourishing. The collected data were entered the computer. To describe and analyze the data, SPSS software (version 20, IBM Corporation, Armonk, NY, USA) was used. Frequency, mean, and standard deviation (SD) were used to describe the data. Chi-square, t-test, and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to analyze the collected data.

### Results

The response rate of the questionnaire was 91%. The mean age of the sample was  $33.01 \pm 9.48$  years. The highest and lowest age was 18 and 62 years, respectively. 329 (90.4%) of them were native to Kurdistan province, and 35 (9.6%) were non-native. 300 (82.4%) of them were housewives and the rest were employed. 69 (19%) of them said that they had a person with chronic disease in their family, and the rest stated that they did not have a chronic illness in their family. 27 (7.4%) of them were illiterate, 72 (19.8%) had elementary education, 69 (19%) middle school, 123 (33.8%) high school, and the rest had university education. The mean of flourishing score in the studied subjects was  $43.74 \pm 7.69$  from the maximum score of 56. This score was  $3.91 \pm 0.69$  from 5. In tables 1 and 2, mean and SD of flourishing rate and its relation with different variables is shown.

According to table 1, there was a statistically significant difference between women's flourishing rate and level of education ( $P = 0.040$ ). The highest and lowest average score of flourishing was recorded in women with academic education and illiterate ones, respectively. There was a statistically significant difference between women's flourishing rate and marital status ( $P = 0.006$ ). This difference was related to single unmarried women with divorced women ( $P = 0.010$ ) and married women with divorced women ( $P = 0.030$ ).

Statistical analysis by one-way ANOVA showed that there was a significant difference

between flourishing rate and economic status ( $P = 0.020$ ).

**Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of flourishing rate in the studied women based on job, being native, level of education, and marital status, 2016**

Variable	Mean $\pm$ SD	P
Being native		
Native	$5.47 \pm 0.95$	0.980
Non-native	$5.47 \pm 1.10$	
Job		
Housewife	$5.45 \pm 0.94$	0.500
Employed	$5.54 \pm 1.04$	
Level of education		
Illiterate	$5.01 \pm 1.22$	0.040
Elementary	$5.56 \pm 0.76$	
Middle school	$5.35 \pm 0.98$	
High school	$5.48 \pm 0.90$	
Academic	$5.63 \pm 1.07$	
Marital status		
Single	$5.48 \pm 1.03$	0.006
Married	$5.51 \pm 0.88$	
Divorced	$4.69 \pm 1.22$	
Widow	$5.55 \pm 1.45$	

SD: Standard deviation

This difference was related to women with low and high economic status. One-way ANOVA analysis showed that there was a significant difference between women's flourishing rate and their mother's literacy ( $P = 0.001$ ).

**Table 2. Mean and standard deviation of flourishing rate in the studied women based on economic status and level of mother's education, 2016**

Variable	Mean $\pm$ SD	P
Level of mother's education		
Illiterate	$5.45 \pm 0.95$	0.001
Elementary	$5.75 \pm 0.68$	
Middle school	$5.15 \pm 1.01$	
High school	$4.77 \pm 1.45$	
Academic	$6.02 \pm 0.92$	
Economic status		
Low	$5.37 \pm 0.94$	0.020
Middle	$5.57 \pm 0.99$	
High	$5.90 \pm 0.84$	

SD: Standard deviation

This difference was significant among illiterate mothers and mothers with high school education ( $P = 0.020$ ), elementary school with high school education ( $P = 0.001$ ), and high school with academic education ( $P = 0.040$ ). The highest and lowest average score of flourishing rate were showed in women whose mothers had university and high school education,, respectively.

### Discussion

This research, which studied flourishing rate and some related factors among women in Sanandaj city, showed that the rate of flourishing was high. This finding is consistent with some studies and is not consistent with some others. In the study by Keyes, it was stated that people with high mental health had a good flourishing. The study found that people with lower mental health were six times more likely to have depression than those with high levels of flourishing. In that study, 17.2% of the subjects had a good flourishing, while 75.5% of the surveyed women in this research had a high degree of flourishing.<sup>4</sup>

It seems that there is a close relationship between flourishing and mental health. Given the high levels of flourishing among the subjects in this study, it is expected that their mental health will be high enough, and for proving it, we need to do more researches in this field. A study conducted in Malaysia showed that 50.1% of the participants in the study had a flourishing life, and there was a significant relationship between flourishing rate and gender, employment status, education level, having a child, and having a patient with chronic disease at home ( $P < 0.050$ ), but there was no significant relationship between flourishing rate with age, marital status, living alone, and economic status.<sup>17</sup> The results of the present study showed that 75.5% of the subjects had flourishing, that is consistent with the results of the Malaysian study.

In this study, there was a significant

difference between women's flourishing rate and educational level, marital status, type of residential home, economic status, and mother's education. However, there was no significant difference between the other variables studied. These results are consistent with some of the Malaysian study findings, and not fit with some others.

Keyes studies have shown that 14 percent of adults become depressed annually, and this is linked to the destruction of social roles, absence from work, reduced productivity, increased care costs, suicide, and more referral to the physician; while, flourishing increases attention in the people.<sup>4</sup> A study done by Moradi Siah Afshadi et al. among students showed that their flourishing had a positive and significant relationship with academic achievement,<sup>16</sup> which is indicative of the fact that flourishing is one of the important factors of a better life and progress and success in life. According to the findings of our study and other studies, it can be claimed that flourishing is one of the important factors in human success that can guarantee his/her mental health. In the present study, more than 50% of the subjects had flourishing, but in Keyes' study 17.2% of the subjects fit the criteria for flourishing.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, this finding is not consistent with the finding of Keyes' study. In another study by Schotanus-Dijkstra et al., 37% of the subjects were flourishers, and some factors such as social support and positive life-events were significantly associated with flourishing.<sup>20</sup> This finding is consistent with our findings.

One of the strengths of this research is that the study is conducted among women, who are the most important components of the family center, and it is important to know the state of their flourishing rate. The second strength of this study is that the participants were randomly selected. The third strong point is that it appears to be the first study on women's flourishing in Iran, which can be useful for further studies about flourishing.



One of the disadvantages of this study is that the participants were a small group of community and some of them may have misplaced their views on the subject.

### Conclusion

The high rate of flourishing of the subjects shows that women can play an important role in family calmness, and given the fact that flourishing has an inverse relationship with depression, mental health of community is expected to be well. Holding educational classes on the mental health of families and the role of flourishing in mental health of the community is one of the issues that health and cultural authorities need to pay special attention to it.

### Conflict of Interests

Authors have no conflict of interests.

### Acknowledgments

We would like to thank all women who participated in this research. We are also grateful to the Student Research Committee of Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences for their cooperation in approving this project and funding this research in the form of a student research project. This paper is the result of a research project with approval number 1395/21, supported by Vice Chancellor for Research and Technology in Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences.

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