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“We must do, and wait”:

The influence of higher education on subjective well-being among Syrian students with refugee status in Amman, Jordan

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Abstract (English)

Higher education for refugees is garnering greater attention worldwide as a means of countering the negative effects of displacement, particularly in response to the Syria crisis. This thesis contributes to literature seeking to understand the psychosocial outcomes of higher education for refugees. Through the theoretical lens of subjective well-being, which prioritises individuals' perceptions of their emotional and eudaimonic well-being rather than assuming the effect of their material conditions, the thesis builds a context-specific understanding of refugee experiences of education by examining the following research question:

> How does higher education influence subjective well-being among Syrian students with refugee status in Amman, Jordan?

Hermeneutic phenomenology is employed to explore the lived experience of 12 participants, using semi-structured interviews with both drawings and verbal responses to understand how external conditions influence the internal life of individuals. The principal findings affirm that higher education supports participants' well-being by providing a sense of meaning and purpose and opportunities to form important relationships. However, stress relating to challenges of accessing, funding, and integrating into higher education also damages participants' emotional well-being. Nevertheless, the majority report that higher education, on balance, improves their well-being, indicating its particularly valuable influence as a source of personal growth and self-actualisation.

Key words: subjective well-being; refugee education; higher education; displacement; Syrian refugees; Jordan; hermeneutic phenomenology.

Word count: 14,998

Abstract (Arabic)

نبذة مختصرة
يحظى التعليم العالي للاجئين باهتمام أكبر في جميع أنحاء العالم كوسيلة لمواجهة الآثار السلبية للنزوح ، لا سيما في الاستجابة للأزمة السورية. تساهم هذه الأطروحة في الأدبيات التي تسعى إلى فهم النتائج النفسية والاجتماعية للتعليم العالي للاجئين من خلال نظرية السلامة الذاتية والتي تعطي الأولوية لتصورات الأفراد للرفاهية و السلامه النفسية والعاطفية بدلاً من افتراض تأثير ظروفهم المادية و حسب. تبنى الأطروحة فهمًا محددًا لسياق تجارب اللاجئين في التعليم من خلال طرح سؤال البحث التالي:
كيف يؤثر التعليم العالي على سلامه وصحتهم الطلاب النفسية من الذين يحملون صفة اللاجئ في عمان-الأردن؟
يتم استخدام الظواهر التأويلية لاستكشاف التجربة الحية لـ 12 مشاركًا ، باستخدام المقابلات شبه المنظمة مع كل من الرسومات والاستجابات اللفظية لفهم كيفية تأثير الظروف الخارجية على الحياة الداخلية للأفراد. تؤكد النتائج الرئيسية أن التعليم العالي يدعم رفاهية و سلامة المشاركين من خلال توفير إحساس بالمعنى والهدف وتوفر الفرصة لتشكيل علاقات مهمة. ومع ذلك ، فإن الضغط المتعلق بتحديات الوصول والتمويل والاندماج في التعليم العالي يضر أيضًا بالرفاهية العاطفية للمشاركين. ومع ذلك ، أفادت الأغلبية أن التعليم العالي ، بشكل عام ، يحسن من نفسيتهم و رفاهيتهم ، مشيراً إلى تأثير التعليم القيم بشكل خاص كمصدر للنمو الشخصي وتحقيق الذات.

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Abbreviations

3RP	The Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GPA	Grade Point Average
HOPES	Higher and Further Education Opportunities and Perspectives for Syrians
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
JD	Jordanian Dinar
JRP	Jordan Response Plan
JRPSC	Jordan Response Platform for the Syria Crisis
LUMID	Lund University Master of Science in International Development and Management
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

1. Introduction

Syria's post-conflict reconstruction and recovery will depend in part upon the extent to which its youth had access to educational opportunities while displaced. More immediately, while the conflict endures, education provides a form of protection for Syrian communities experiencing the largest displacement crisis in the world (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2017a). Access to education therefore forms a major component of national, regional, and international responses to the Syrian conflict. The forced displacement of Syrians—a population with high levels of education pre-conflict—has raised the profile of higher education for refugees in a field previously focused on meeting primary and secondary educational needs (Save the Children et al., 2018; UNHCR, 2019a). This shift is further supported by those affected: participatory action research with young Syrians found that graduating from university is the top aspiration of 20 to 24 year olds (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2019: 4).

Alongside higher education, provision of mental health and psychosocial support—another historically under-served area—has received increased attention in the Syria crisis response. As well as reflecting the high incidence of conflict-related trauma and mental disorders within refugee populations (Fazel et al., 2005), this provision responds to calls from practitioners and researchers to devote greater attention to daily stressors experienced by displaced communities (Miller and Rasmussen, 2010; Soye and Tauson, 2018). Unlike conflict-related trauma, daily stressors may include challenges around social integration, living conditions, or accessing essential services such as education. These stressors necessitate consideration of refugees' daily lives and attention to mental health beyond the narrow lens of diagnosable disorders.

With the second-highest per-capita concentration of refugees globally, Jordan's response to the Syria crisis is significant for understanding how to manage the negative effects of displacement and fulfil refugees' needs. This thesis adds to this understanding by examining how higher education influences Syrian refugees' well-being in Amman, Jordan.

1.1 Purpose and motivation

Literature on higher education for refugees often emphasises its role in supporting socioeconomic integration and labour market participation (Dryden-Peterson, 2010; Lenette, 2016; Bircan, 2018). There are, however, further reasons for focusing on higher education in such contexts. This thesis instead contributes to discussions about the role of education in mitigating the psychosocial effects of displacement (Machel, 1996; Dryden-Peterson, 2017). Recognising that mental health is not only the absence of disorder (Patel et al., 2018: 1553), the theory of subjective well-being is used to interpret the experiences of Syrian students with refugee status. Subjective well-being is valuable for exploring both positive and negative aspects of mental health. The theory is also useful in an educational context as it encourages an understanding of well-being not only in terms of emotional experience, 'emotional well-being', but also the individual's ability to fulfil their potential, 'eudaimonic well-being' (Magyar and Keyes, 2019). Together, these concepts define mental health as both feeling well and functioning well.

Studies of well-being are prolific, but many rely on objective measures in which well-being is defined by observable qualities such as an individual's income or quality of accommodation. Well-being among refugees has been explored in a similar manner, focusing on the ability to meet basic needs and access essential services (see Brett and te Lintelo, 2018; Krafft and Sieverding, 2018). However, objective measures assume the effect that material conditions have on individuals (Layard, 2005) and overlook the influence of culture and context on definitions of well-being (White, 2016: 5). In essence, they neglect the lived experience of well-being. Conversely, subjective measures prioritise an individual's self-evaluation of well-being, which facilitates dialogue between existing conceptions of well-being and context-specific meanings. At a time of unprecedented movement of populations, this understanding reduces reliance on *a priori* assumptions about what constitutes well-being in displacement and ensures better responses to the needs of those affected (Malkki, 1995: 510).

The focus of the research is on the connection between well-being and education, rather than wider factors that might influence overall experiences of displacement.[1] Moreover, the research does not seek to formulate a universal framework for understanding well-being among refugees in higher education; the small sample size precludes this. Yet by placing the voices of those directly affected centre-stage, the thesis supplements studies of refugee education that focus on high-level policy decisions and broad trends. Examining individual experiences among a small group also avoids the common practice of applying 'refugee' as a homogeneous identity, which risks depriving individuals of complex emotions and experiences (Antonioua and Zemblayas, 2018). Instead, acknowledging that we cannot "claim to know, from the mere fact of refugeeness, the actual sources of a person's suffering" (Malkki, 1995: 510), the term 'refugee' is not seen as an identity but a loose legal term encapsulating diverse individual experiences.[2]

Participants in the research share two characteristics: UNHCR has registered them as refugees in Jordan and they are attending higher education institutions. Beyond this, their paths to education differ. Some fled Syria after the outbreak of conflict in 2011, where they were planning to attend —or already attending—university. Some were born in Jordan, but face challenges integrating due to their legal status and the prohibitive costs they incur as 'international' students. Each participant has their own dreams and aspirations, their own challenges, and their own inner life. To understand how higher education might support their psychosocial needs, their voices need to be heard.

[1] The terms 'displaced person' and 'displacement' are used here to describe the situation of refugees. They refer to the experience of forced displacement due to conflict and discrimination, and do not in this context refer to Internally Displaced Persons who have remained within Syria.

[2] The 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (UNHCR, 2010: 3) defines a refugee as a person who "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality." Although not a signatory to the Convention, Jordan accepts this definition. In this thesis, the term refers both to refugees and asylum seekers.

1.2 Research question

The thesis employs hermeneutic phenomenology to understand the lived experiences of individual Syrian refugees, using semi-structured interviews with two types of output: drawings and verbal responses. Combining the interpretive process of hermeneutics with the inductive reasoning of phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology is a means of building a bridge between an objective condition—that is, access to higher education—and the individual's inner life. It thus supports exploration of the following research question:

> How does higher education influence subjective well-being among Syrian students with refugee status in Amman, Jordan?

The relationship between higher education and well-being for the 12 research participants is discussed in terms of a) specific features of higher education that affect well-being and b) participants' perceptions of the overall influence of higher education on well-being. While well-being as influenced by factors aside from education was not a focus of the research, where participants volunteered comments on their wider well-being these were included in the analysis. The theory of subjective well-being provides a lens through which participant experiences are interpreted, highlighting both their emotional and eudaimonic well-being. However, participants' lived experiences take precedence and aspects that do not align with the theory are incorporated into the discussion.

1.3 Outline

The thesis first provides context to the research, with emphasis on current conditions for Syrian refugees in Jordan and their access to higher education. The literature review then explores research relevant to refugee education and well-being. The theory of subjective well-being and its application to the context of higher education is subsequently explained. Next, the methodology and research implementation are described. The results and a discussion of the key findings are then followed by conclusions and opportunities for further research.

2. Background

2.1 Syrian refugees in Jordan

Jordan has a long history of hosting refugees fleeing from conflict in neighbouring countries. The wave of refugees following the outbreak of the Syrian conflict in 2011 has, however, raised the number of displaced persons in Jordan to unprecedented levels. In early 2020, an estimated 1,380,000 Syrian refugees resided in Jordan, of which 656,418 are registered with UNHCR (2020: 1). Given Jordan's estimated total population of 10.1 million (United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], 2019), Syrian refugees comprise 13% of the population—by far the largest group of refugees. Of those registered with UNHCR, approximately 80% live in host communities and 20% in camps. The majority reside in the northern governorates, with the Amman Governorate hosting the highest proportion (Figure 2.1).

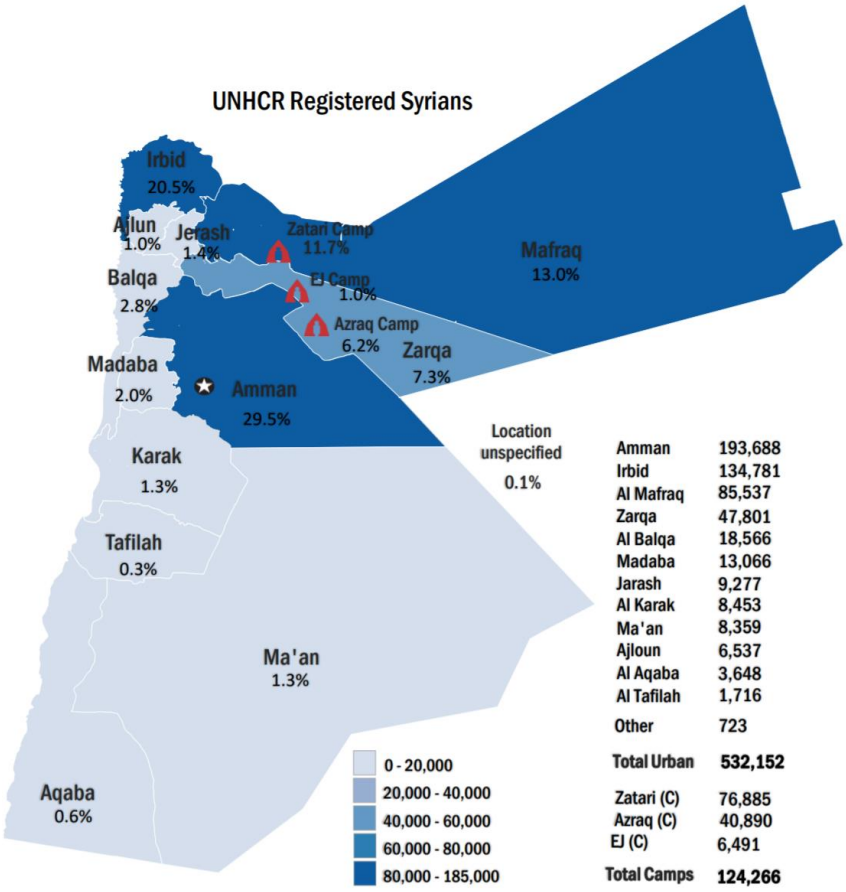

Figure 2.1. Map of Jordan showing UNHCR-registered Syrians (UNHCR, 2020: 1).

The length of the Syrian conflict and Syrian refugees' presence in Jordan has necessitated national, regional, and international responses that address the humanitarian-development nexus: the immediate humanitarian response has evolved into plans to support long-term development. The Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP), led by UNHCR and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2020), has advanced the principles of the Global Compact on Refugees (United Nations [UN], 2018). Although Jordan is not a signatory to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Rights of Refugees, its Memorandum of Understanding with UNHCR affirms the government's commitment to international principles of protection, including the definition of refugee and the principle of *non-refoulement*[3] (UNHCR, 2013: 1). Consistent with these principles, the government has introduced systemic changes to accommodate Syrian refugees across various sectors and has, through the Jordan Response Plan (JRP), improved coordination with the international community. All responses share the goal of promoting resilience, both of those displaced and host communities. To achieve this goal, education has been recognised as essential. The demographic profile of Syrian refugees further underlines its importance; 48% of Syrians in Jordan are under 15 (Assaad et al., 2018: 5). Consequently, the education sector has attracted the largest proportion of international and government investment within the JRP (Jordan Response Platform for the Syria Crisis [JRPSC], 2018; 2019).

Syrian refugees nevertheless face both socioeconomic hardship and legal uncertainty in Jordan. The 2019 Vulnerability Assessment Framework for Jordan found that 76% of refugee respondents are below the Minimum Expenditure Basket required to meet basic needs (Brown et al., 2019: 8). Approximately 85% of Syrian refugees in Jordan live below the poverty line, measured at US$ 96 per individual monthly, compared to 15.7% of Jordanians (UNHCR, 2018: 1; UNICEF, 2018: 16). Jordan has no specific legal framework for refugees and designates their stay in the country as temporary (UNHCR, 2013: 1). This legal uncertainty, creating as it does barriers to formal employment in Jordan, perpetuates poverty and vulnerability for Syrian refugees.

[3] *Non-refoulement* is a principle included in the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (UNHCR, 2010: 4) which prevents a state from forcing refugees or asylum seekers to return to a country in which they are likely to be subjected to persecution.

While work permit availability has increased (UNHCR, 2019b: 1–2), sectors for which permits are available remain limited and concentrated in low-skilled employment (Lau et al., 2020: 27). Among employed Syrian refugees, most males work in agriculture, construction, or as mechanics, while females are more often engaged in home-based activities such as catering (UNHCR, 2017a: 1). Clear data on employment among Syrians in Jordan are limited, but available evidence suggests high rates of informality and numerous barriers to employment.[4] Work permits also exhibit a clear gender imbalance; just 5% are issued to women (Ministry of Labour, 2020: 3).

The ramifications of this situation are complex. On the one hand, high poverty rates have contributed to increased negative coping mechanisms such as child labour and child marriage within Syrian communities, prompting calls for educational opportunities as a protective factor (No Lost Generation, 2019). Conversely, limited job opportunities have drawn attention away from higher education opportunities and towards vocational programmes (Lau et al., 2020: 33). In recognition of how challenges faced by Syrian refugees intersect with their experience of conflict, mental health and psychosocial support has also increasingly become a concern of the international community. Efforts to extend support have been introduced by over 47 organisations, ranging from community-level interventions, such as information dissemination, to clinical management of psychological disorders (Soye and Tauson, 2018: 11).

2.2 Access to higher education for Syrian refugees in Jordan

Higher education[5] for refugees is attracting increased attention. Both UNHCR (Dryden-Peterson, 2011) and numerous non-governmental organisations (Save the Children et al., 2018) have called for greater provision, with the UNHCR 2012-2016 Education Strategy (2012) making it a priority for the first time. Although absent from both the Education For All Framework (World Education

[4] A 2017 quantitative study of 501 Syrian refugees across a number of cities in Jordan projected a 54% employment rate (Alhajahmad et al., 2018: 3), while a demographic study of Syrian refugees in Jordan estimated that 53% are working informally (Krafft et al., 2018: 19).

[5] The term 'higher education' is used differently between countries. Here the World Bank (2017) definition is employed, in which 'higher education' is considered interchangeable with 'tertiary education' and refers to all education that is pursued after secondary education. This includes universities (public and private) and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

Forum, 2000) and the Millennium Development Goals (UN, n.d.), higher education is included within Sustainable Development Goal 4.3: "Ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university" (UN, 2016: 5).

In Jordan, higher education is a national priority and national enrolment rates exceed those of countries with a similar income level (Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, 2017; National Committee for Human Resource Development, 2015: 18). However, just 2–5% of Syrian refugees aged 18–22 attend higher education, compared to 24–46% of Jordanians in this age group (Tiltnes et al., 2019: 82–83). While a major initiative has been implemented to provide primary and secondary education for Syrian refugees, enrolment rates decline as the group reaches higher education. The decline is particularly steep for female Syrians, with enrolment approximately half that of males by the age of 20 (Figure 2.2). These statistics echo global data showing only 3% of young refugees reach university education, compared to an average of 37% (UNHCR, 2019a: 7), and contrast starkly with pre-conflict Syria, where uptake of free, public higher education was high and women comprised over half the university student population (Watenpaugh et al., 2013: 8).

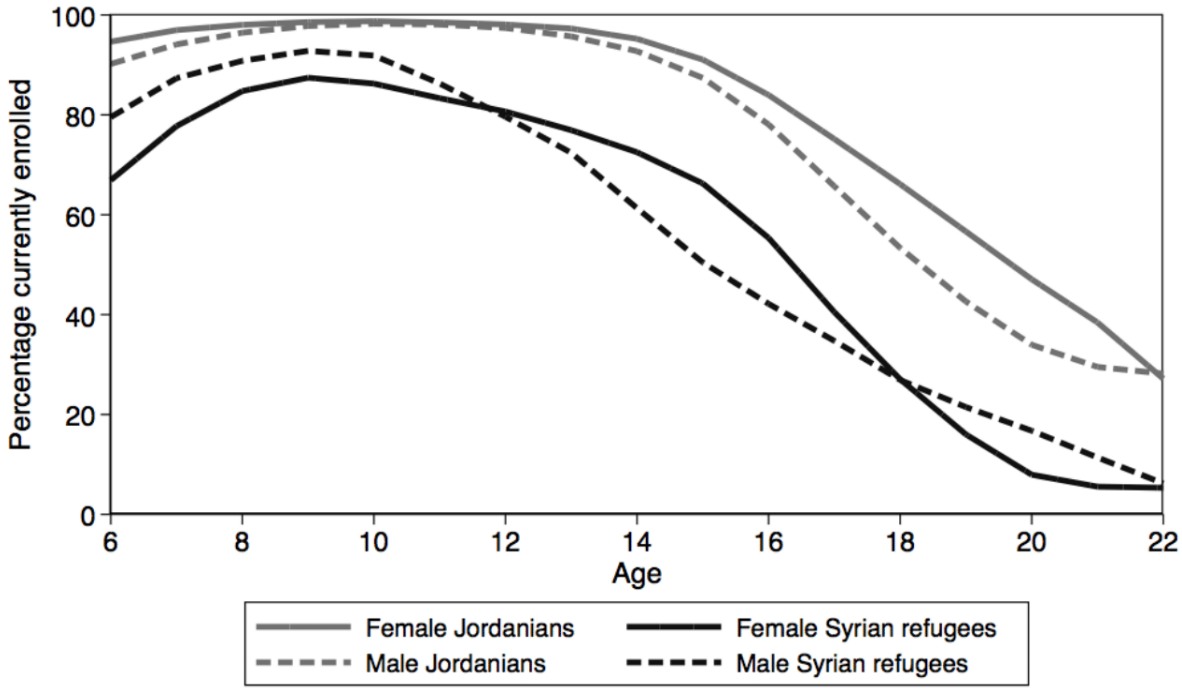

Figure 2.2. Enrolment in education (percentage enrolled), by sex and age, for Jordanians and Syrian refugees aged 6–22 in 2016 (Krafft et al., 2018: 22).

Improving access to higher education has been a priority of the JRP since 2015 (JRPSC, 2019), but numerous barriers have limited university enrolment rates among Syrian refugees. Primarily, the cost of higher education is prohibitive for many Syrian refugees as they must pay full international student fees (Lau et al., 2020: 20). Scholarships provided by the international community have eased this burden, but demand far outstrips supply and available places fluctuate year-on-year (Kirk and Sherab, 2016: 22). For those with financial means, other major barriers are lack of documentation and the language of instruction, with English skills—not usually necessary in Syria—often required in Jordan (Center for Strategic Studies, 2018: 7). The restricted job market is a further disincentive and employability-focused programmes draw young people away from higher education (Lau et al., 2020: 20). Availability of vocational training is also limited, however; an estimated 89% of Syrians aged 19–24 in Jordan do not participate in any form of education or training (Center for Strategic Studies, 2018: 3).

Despite these barriers, graduating from university is the top aspiration of Syrians aged 20–24 (UNICEF, 2019: 4). Both students and their families are willing to travel and make significant sacrifices to achieve this goal (Watenpaugh et al., 2013: 6). The value of higher education is also recognised by the Jordanian government and the international community. A 2019 conference organised by HOPES (Higher and Further Education Opportunities and Perspectives for Syrians) assembled 118 representatives from ministries, universities, and embassies in Amman to call for increased higher education opportunities, including alternative paths such as online learning. Importantly, stakeholders also advocated that the rationale of higher education for refugees not be "reduced to enhancing their employability" but recognised as transforming "vulnerability into resilience through the acquisition of skills" (HOPES, 2019: 25). The academic literature has addressed this and other debates on refugee education and well-being, and it is to this that we now turn.

3. Literature review

To further situate the study of higher education for refugees, this literature review provides an overview of existing research on refugee education and well-being. First, research exploring the purpose of refugee education and its psychosocial effects is evaluated. Second, increased attention to higher education for refugees, including its impact on well-being, is discussed and contrasted to the under-researched Jordanian context. Third, the growing importance of well-being in the field of development is outlined. Finally, gaps in current research are summarised and the thesis placed within these gaps.

3.1 The rationale of education for refugees

Refugee education emerged as an established field following large-scale displacement after the Second World War. Together, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948) and the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (UNHCR, 2010) made education a fundamental right for refugees. While the increasingly protracted nature of conflict since 1945 has raised the profile of refugee education (Dryden-Peterson, 2011; Boyacı and Öz, 2018), the articulation of this right and interpretations of the purpose it serves have varied.

The largest international organisation with a mandate for refugee education, UNHCR[6], frames the purpose of education in terms of three "durable solutions": integration, third country resettlement, and repatriation (Dryden-Peterson, 2017: 3). From 1945 to the late 1970s, when refugees were mostly of European origin, integration was considered paramount and education therefore focused on acculturation and language acquisition (Preston, 1991; Chimni, 1999). In the 1980s and 1990s, as refugee numbers worldwide grew and countries of origin shifted to low-income countries in the Global South, repatriation and third country resettlement grew in prominence. As refugees often fled to neighbouring low-income countries, integration was deemed untenable and education

[6] UN mandates relating to education are split between UNESCO and UNICEF, but support for refugees, including education, is that of UNHCR.

became characterised as temporary support before refugees moved on (Davies and Talbot, 2008; Boyacı and Öz, 2018).

Such characterisations of refugee education have since been challenged by authors emphasising the increasingly prolonged nature of displacement. Dryden-Peterson (2010; 2017), for example, argues that education cannot be a temporary solution or a means of supporting repatriation. Many child refugees spend all their school-age years in displacement (Dryden-Peterson, 2010: 11-12). In part, the increasing length of displacement has recentred education as a tool for enabling integration, as the Jordanian government's commitment to improving Syrian refugees' access to education shows (see European Commission, 2017). But it has also highlighted the broader functions education serves, including psychosocial support for children affected by conflict (Machel, 1996) and purposes that do not fit into UNHCR's durable solutions. Dryden-Peterson (2017: 18) argues for considering a fourth position of "radical uncertainty", in which education prepares refugees for an "unknowable future". This wider rationale of refugee education is discernible in responses to the Syria crisis. Both the JRP and 3RP aim to promote "resilience" among refugees, defined as the ability to absorb, adapt, and transform in the face of shocks and stresses (UNDP and UNHCR, 2020: 8). This focus on resilience allows a more nuanced understanding of refugee education that incorporates greater concern for psychosocial effects.

3.2 Higher education for refugees

The high number of school-age refugees worldwide has meant most researchers and practitioners examining refugee education focus on primary and secondary education (UNHCR, 2017b: 4–10). This remains the case for literature on Syrian refugees (Culbertson and Constant, 2015; Krafft et al., 2018; Assaad et al., 2018). Growing recognition of higher education for refugees is, however, clear in literature highlighting its importance for socioeconomic integration and labour market participation (Dryden-Peterson, 2010; Lenette, 2016; Bircan, 2018). Furthermore, higher education's broader role is recognised in discussions of how it can mitigate risk of radicalisation (Avery and Said, 2017) and support future development of refugees' countries of origin (Kirk and Sherab, 2016). The effect of higher education on refugees' well-being has also been explored, including its influence on self-development (Jack et al., 2019) and challenges of integration

(Mangan and Winter, 2017; Grüttner, 2019). Such studies show that access to higher education alone cannot support positive outcomes: students who are refugees require staff awareness and university support (Earnest et al., 2010; Jack et al., 2019). Without this, university may be "overwhelming given the combination of stressors relative to resettlement issues and adapting to new educational settings" (Earnest et al., 2010: 169).

This literature is, however, concentrated in high-income host countries. In Jordan, concern for the well-being of Syrian refugees in higher education has been present in some scholarship programmes (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit [GIZ], n.d.) and evaluations of specific interventions (Al-Rousan et al., 2018). However, most literature accentuates the practical challenges of accessing higher education. Al-Hawamdeh and El-Ghali (2017) argue that attempts to accommodate Syrian refugee students within Jordan's higher education sector have been limited; they are largely treated like students of any other nationality. Watenpaugh et al. (2013), Haj-Yehia and Arar (2018), and Ruisi (2019) echo this, setting out various barriers that persist, including documentation requirements, high tuition fees, high competition for scholarships, and different teaching methods. The psychosocial effects of these challenges and the lived experience of Syrian refugees have, however, been largely overlooked.

3.3 Mental health, well-being, and development

Mental health has become increasingly prominent in development research since the mid-20th century. While initially defined in terms of disorders, contemporary research views mental health as also including assets and strengths (Keyes, 1998; Frisch, 2000). Emphasis on treatment and rehabilitation has therefore been balanced by equal emphasis on prevention and mental health promotion (Huebner, 2004; Geddes, 2006; Patel et al., 2018). This broader definition led to a new focus on well-being in development contexts, aided by the emergence of human-centred approaches to development which—led by Sen's capability approach—underscore individual freedom, empowerment, and internal capacities rather than material transformation of the external world (Sen, 1999; Chandler, 2013). The clearest expression of this shift, and a marker of its increasingly widespread adoption, is found in the Lancet Commission on global mental health and sustainable development (Patel et al., 2018). The Commission affirmed that mental health exists

on a continuum from “mild, time-limited distress” to “severely disabling conditions” and framed mental health as both a public good and a fundamental human right (Patel et al., 2018: 1553). It is within these principles that this thesis is positioned.

Studies of well-being have proliferated, led by major international efforts such as the Better Life Initiative of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2014). Debate over the definition of well-being, methods of measurement, and the contexts in which it should be measured has nevertheless persisted. The broader debate focuses on how far objective conditions can be used to evaluate an individual’s well-being. This is discussed below first in terms of general theories of well-being and second in terms of education-specific theories. A second debate looks specifically at well-being among refugees and how far the conditions of displacement warrant attention. This thesis draws both on general literature on well-being and literature examining the specific contexts of education and displacement.

3.3.1 Objective v. subjective well-being

Definitions of well-being can be loosely grouped into two categories: objective and subjective. As well as being measured differently, they reveal different theories of the causes and features of well-being. Objective well-being encompasses aspects of life that can be measured by an external observer such as income, jobs, and housing. Such an approach allows for well-being to be measured and compared (OECD, 2014: 2). Its relatively narrow conception of human development has, however, drawn criticism. First, the focus on externally-observable aspects of life suggests a direct causal link between material conditions and well-being, neglecting the internal life of individuals (Layard, 2005). Second, what constitutes well-being in one cultural context does not necessarily apply in others. White and Blackmore (2016) question the dominance of objective, quantitative measures of well-being developed in high-income contexts. Applying such measures indiscriminately risks parroting “the normative statements of relatively empowered actors” (White and Blackmore, 2016: xii) and ignoring the cultural, contextual aspects of well-being that can have significant influence.

Subjective well-being, while acknowledging the importance of objective conditions, prioritises the views of individuals whose well-being is being assessed (OECD, 2013: 10). It therefore highlights psychosocial and emotional aspects of the human experience to a far greater degree. Initially, research studied the elusive concept of 'happiness' and how to achieve it. From this emerged a theory of emotional well-being that examines individuals' self-reported emotions (Bradburn, 1969; Diener, 1984). However, theorists such as Maslow and Waterman—worried that this approach over-emphasised pleasurable experiences—argued that the *meaning* of experiences be given greater weight. Drawing on the Aristotelian concept of 'eudaimonia', they developed the idea that pursuing one's potential, or 'self-actualisation', gives true meaning (Maslow, 1968; Waterman, 1984). The theory of eudaimonic well-being emerged, tied to the idea of 'positive functioning'. Positive functioning reflects key capabilities that enable an individual to function well, including personal skills that support psychological functioning and social capabilities that enable the individual to flourish within their community (Ryff, 1989; Keyes, 1998). While emotional and eudaimonic well-being have frequently been measured separately, researchers have advocated integrating both into a comprehensive model of subjective well-being that embraces the complexity of mental health (Keyes, 2005, 2007; Gallagher et al., 2009; Magyar and Keyes, 2019).

In development work, subjective well-being is rarely examined in isolation due to concerns that "it could validate a withdrawal of material support … on the grounds that those who suffer material poverty may rate their quality of life as highly as those who have much more" (White, 2010: 166). Accordingly, combining subjective and objective measures is commonplace, including the Bath Well-being and Development Framework (White, 2010) and the Resources and Needs Questionnaire (McGregor, McKay and Velazco, 2007). A smaller-scale thesis, however, provides an opportunity to devote greater attention to subjective well-being while exploring just one domain of objective well-being: access to education.

Process theorists have identified the link between education and subjective well-being, arguing for the importance of educational activities to well-being (Maslow, 1965, 1968; Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, 2014), as have goal theorists, who spotlight the importance of working towards a goal (Emmons, 1986; Brunstein, 1993). However, genetic and personality disposition theorists, to whom well-being is shaped by personal qualities rather than experiences, dispute the influence of educational experiences on well-being (Diener and Lucas, 1999; Diener et al., 2018). Examining

subjective well-being qualitatively enables further consideration of how exactly educational experiences impact well-being, in contrast to more restrictive quantitative measures that dominate existing literature (White and Blackmore, 2016).

3.3.2 Trauma-focused v. psychosocial approaches

Traditionally, studies of refugee mental health have adopted a trauma-focused psychiatric epidemiological perspective, whereby diagnosable psychiatric conditions resulting from exposure to armed conflict, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), are the main point of concern (Fazel et al., 2005; Miller et al., 2006). However, echoing the shift in the definition of mental health more widely, contemporary research has moved from a trauma-focused to a psychosocial approach that acknowledges mental health as a continuum influenced by interrelated social and psychological factors (Miller and Rasmussen, 2010). This emphasises the experience of displacement, in which refugees may face poverty, marginalisation, and limited access to key services (Soye and Tauson, 2018: 10). As in the daily stressors model (Figure 3.1), these factors may be unrelated to conflict, or may be exacerbated by it.

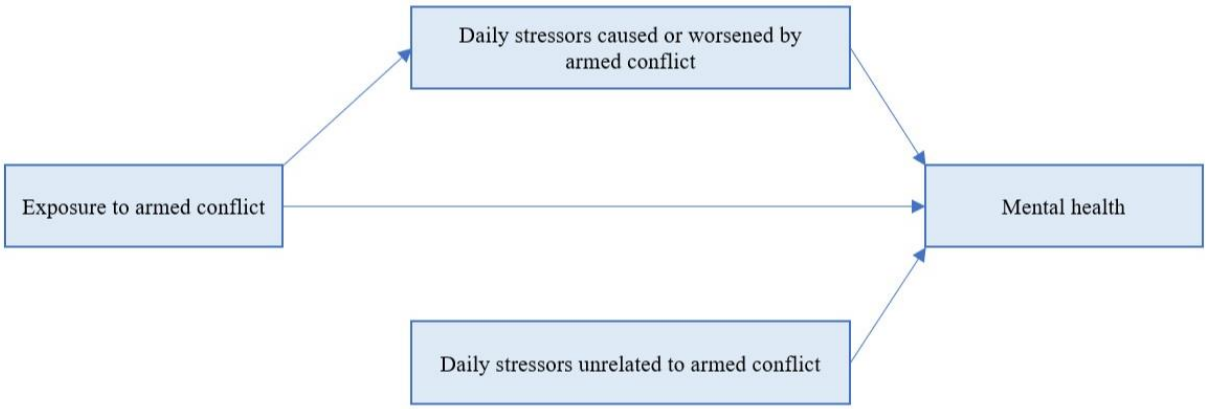

Figure 3.1. The daily stressors model, showing that living conditions in displacement mediate the relationship between exposure to armed conflict and mental health (Miller and Rasmussen, 2010: 9).

Recognising the importance of daily stressors, mental health and psychosocial support interventions in emergencies identify a spectrum of provisions. At one end of the spectrum, specialised services, including clinical mental health interventions, must be provided. However, as exemplified by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) intervention pyramid (Figure 3.2), other levels of support must underpin the provision of specialised services. Together, these levels address varied needs and reduce the burden of daily stressors.

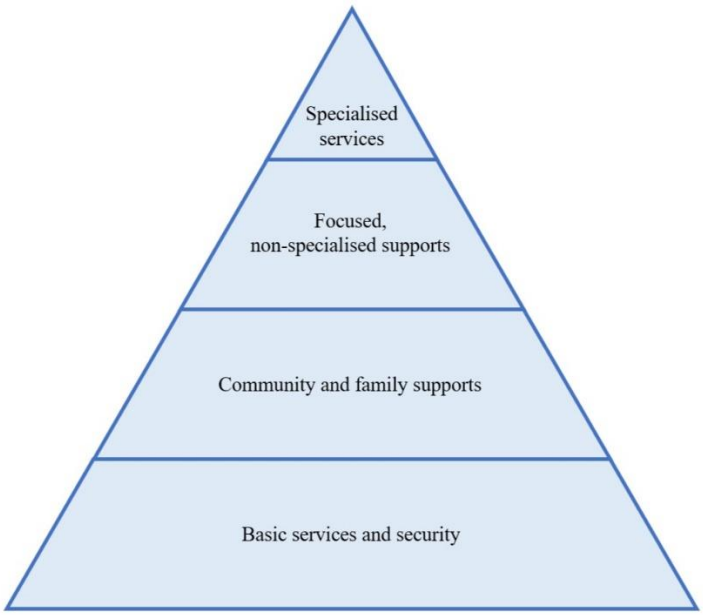

Figure 3.2. Intervention pyramid for mental health and psychosocial support in emergencies (IASC, 2007: 12).

Recent studies have shown that daily stressors affect mental health outcomes for Syrian refugees. Two studies in Lebanon illustrate the link between limited access to education and psychosocial distress: Sim, Bowes and Gardner (2018) demonstrate its impact on both parents and children and DeJong et al. (2017) connect non-attendance of education to greater risk of protection issues such as early marriage. Most studies of refugee well-being in Jordan, however, focus on material conditions—such as unemployment and legal uncertainty (see Brett and te Lintelo, 2018; Krafft and Sieverding, 2018)—without exploring how these conditions influence mental health.

Practitioners in the field of psychosocial support have called for greater engagement with qualitative measures of daily stressors for Syrian refugees in Jordan to balance the relatively well-researched areas of conflict-related PTSD and trauma (Soye and Tauson, 2018: 5). We must therefore explore daily conditions, such as educational experiences, as a potential source of daily stressors or a means of mitigating the effects of other stressors.

3.4 Gaps in existing research

Although the multifaceted role of refugee education is increasingly recognised, including in the Syria crisis response, higher education's potential to support refugee well-being remains under-researched. This is particularly relevant in Jordan, where barriers to higher education are well-recognised but refugee voices and a mental health perspective are often absent from research. Additionally, while the importance of promoting well-being is now well-recognised in development literature, further qualitative studies are required to understand how material conditions influence an individual's internal life. That daily stressors influence well-being in displacement is understood, but how education sits within this context, particularly among Syrian refugees, warrants more attention.

Having identified where the research fits within existing literature, we now turn to the theoretical framework supporting the work.

4. Theory

To explore the relationship between educational experiences and well-being, this thesis applies the theory of subjective well-being. Subjective well-being is valuable as it prioritises the individual's evaluation of well-being, going beyond objective measures that incorporate assumptions about what constitutes well-being (Layard, 2005). This is especially appropriate when examining refugee well-being due to their complex conditions, discussed in Section 3.3. Applying the theory of subjective well-being in an educational context allows exploration of the impact of the conditions of displacement, highlighted by the daily stressors model (Miller and Rasmussen, 2010), and examination of mental health beyond diagnosable disorders, as the Lancet Commission proposed (Patel et al., 2018). Studying subjective well-being therefore promotes a fuller understanding of how far education meets refugees' psychosocial needs.

The following discussion explains the concept of subjective well-being and how it is theorised in this thesis. An analytical framework of the theory of subjective well-being and its application to participants' lived experiences of higher education is then outlined.

4.1 The nature of subjective well-being

The subjective well-being model used in this thesis comprises two main concepts: emotional well-being and eudaimonic well-being, with the latter incorporating both psychological well-being and social well-being. Emotional well-being is characterised by an individual's emotions and overall perceptions of their life, while eudaimonic well-being reflects an individual's ability to function well (Magyar and Keyes, 2019). Emotional well-being therefore entails whether a person feels happy or sad, affectionate or angry. Eudaimonic well-being, by contrast, captures contentment derived from activities that support positive functioning, such as nurturing skills or progressing towards a goal. Therefore, while pleasurable activities may promote emotional well-being, activities that are not immediately pleasurable but meaningful in another way may promote eudaimonic well-being. Studying for an exam may, for example, be stressful, but may also lead to personal growth. It may not therefore promote emotional well-being, at least in the short-term, but may promote eudaimonic well-being.

Exploring emotional and eudaimonic well-being together provides an understanding of how participants evaluate the balance between pleasure and meaning in their personal experience and how they value different aspects of their education. They may highlight links between emotional and eudaimonic well-being: to take again the example of studying for an exam—this may indeed promote emotional well-being if the participant feels it supports their personal growth. A model of subjective well-being incorporating both emotional and eudaimonic measures therefore supports a more complete understanding of the influence of higher education on well-being in displacement.

To explore subjective well-being in an educational setting, this thesis also calls on process and goal theories of well-being. Process theorists emphasise the role activities and experiences play in shaping well-being (Maslow, 1965, 1968; Csikszentmihalyi, 1988), while goal theorists enhance this by highlighting the importance of long-term goals and the ability to work towards these goals (Emmons, 1986; Brunstein, 1993). In contrast, genetic and personality disposition theorists emphasise more the influence of personality on well-being (Deiner and Lucas, 1999; Deiner et al., 2018). While the research draws on the assumption that activities and experiences are a dominant influence on well-being, participants were given space to also attribute well-being to personality. In this way, participants' lived experiences remained paramount.

We now delve further into the two elements of subjective well-being: emotional well-being and eudaimonic well-being.

4.1.1 Emotional well-being

Emotional well-being focuses on an individual's moods and emotions, defined as affect, and their life satisfaction. As positive affect and negative affect have been found to be independent (Bradburn, 1969), both are evaluated. Thus, emotional well-being is understood as more than simply the absence of negative moods and emotions: it is also the presence of positive moods and emotions. States of positive affect may be described as happiness, joy, elation, contentment, pride, affection, or ecstasy. Negative affect, by contrast, covers feelings such as guilt and shame, sadness, anxiety and worry, anger, stress, depression, and envy (Diener, 1984).

The relative strength of positive and negative affect is determined by both the frequency and the intensity with which emotions are felt, as evaluated by research participants (Diener, 1984). A student may recognise that they are experiencing anxiety about their studies, for example, but have previously experienced more intense feelings of happiness and pride about studying. Perhaps they expect that these feelings of happiness and pride may return, or conversely that their anxiety will grow as graduation approaches. In this way, participants can describe the balance between positive and negative affect, and how this relates to their experiences of higher education.

The participant's understanding of the balance between positive and negative affect reflects their life satisfaction. While affect incorporates responses to immediate conditions, evaluations of life satisfaction are holistic judgements of one's life and so more stable over time (Magyar and Keyes, 2019: 391). To form this judgement, individuals evaluate numerous domains of life, such as education, marriage, or work, depending on how their life is structured (Diener, 1984: 545). As this thesis examines experiences of higher education, satisfaction within the domain of education is the main focal point. Satisfaction may be reflected, for example, in a participant's overall positive judgement of their experience of higher education. Dissatisfaction may be evident if voicing a desire to change aspects of their educational experience.

For ethical reasons, participants were not asked about life satisfaction outside of higher education. However, where participants drew connections between their experience of higher education and their life as a whole, this is reported. Along with statements of satisfaction about one's current life, this may also be indicated by the extent to which an individual wishes to change their life (Diener et al., 1999: 277).

4.1.2 Eudaimonic well-being

Eudaimonic well-being centres on the Aristotelian belief that pursuit of self-development and achieving one's potential generates well-being (Waterman, 1984: 16). From this base, two constructs have been established that deliver eudaimonic well-being: psychological well-being and social well-being. Theories of psychological and social well-being illuminate the "essential features" of well-being that enable an individual to function well (Ryff, 2014: 11). Psychological

well-being emphasises the individual's independent functioning, while social well-being positions the individual within their wider community and society.

Psychological well-being has been connected to a range of concepts such as self-actualisation (Maslow, 1968) and full functioning (Rogers, 1963). These varied criteria were combined by Ryff (1989) into a model encompassing six concepts: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. These concepts reflect an individual's personal and interpersonal capacities, and a summary of how they are defined is provided in Table 4.1. This thesis explores how participants perceive higher education's influence on these aspects of well-being. If, for example, a participant feels higher education has given them the opportunity to form meaningful relationships, this illustrates 'positive relations with others'. If, however, a participant feels unable to develop their potential, this suggests that higher education has not contributed to—or has even adversely affected—their 'personal growth'.

Table 4.1. Ryff's model of psychological well-being (adapted from Ryff, 1989: 1071; 2014: 11).

Concept	**Definition**
Self-acceptance	The knowledge and acceptance participants have of themselves, including awareness of personal limitations.
Positive relations with others	The extent to which participants have warm, trusting interpersonal relations with others.
Autonomy	How far participants are independent, exercise control over their own life, and regulate their behaviour from within.
Environmental mastery	The participant's ability to manage their life situations and choose environments within which they can function well and participate actively.
Purpose in life	The extent to which participants feel their lives have meaning, purpose and direction.
Personal growth	The extent to which the individual is able to continue to develop their potential and to self-actualise.

Social well-being, building on the importance of relationships, places an individual within their community and environment. Keyes (1998) developed a multidimensional model of five key elements of relations with others: social integration, social contributions, social coherence, social actualisation, and social acceptance. These elements, explained in Table 4.2, illuminate how well an individual functions in their social roles, for example as a neighbour or colleague. Psychological and social well-being overlap in terms of the concepts of 'positive relations with others' and 'social integration'. In this thesis, the exploration of psychological well-being focuses on relations between individuals, while social well-being focuses on the participant's relations with the wider community. For example, references to specific friendships or meaningful relationships formed at university are viewed as positive relations with others, while references to belonging to a wider community are interpreted as social integration.

Table 4.2. Keyes' model of social well-being (adapted from Keyes, 1998: 122-123).

Concept	**Definition**
Social integration	The evaluation of the quality of the participant's relationship to the wider society and community, and the extent of feelings of belonging.
Social contributions	The evaluation of the participant's social value—whether, and to what extent, the individual feels that their actions are valued by society.
Social coherence	How the participant perceives the quality, organisation, and operation of the social world.
Social actualisation	The participant's evaluation of the trajectory of society, reflected through their interpretation of the condition of society and its potential for development.
Social acceptance	How the participant judges others in their society or community, shown through trust in others and a belief that others are capable of positive capacities such as kindness.

4.2 Analytical framework

To clarify how the elements of subjective well-being are applied in the thesis, Table 4.3 illustrates an analytical framework for the context of refugee experiences of higher education. The framework combines emotional and eudaimonic well-being, applying the concept of emotional well-being and a combination of Ryff's model of psychological well-being and Keyes' model of social well-being to the context of higher education. The framework is used to guide data collection and interpret participant responses, as explained further in Sections 5.1 and 5.6. The theory is a means of understanding participant experiences, but is not applied as an exhaustive structure to categorise participant responses. Both inductive and deductive reasoning are applied, with participant experiences remaining predominant and insights from theory used to interpret patterns or themes (Creswell and Poth, 2018: 54). The following section details this and other elements of the methodological approach.

Table 4.3. Application of subjective well-being to refugee experiences of higher education (developed by the author with content drawn from Diener, 1984; Ryff, 1989; Keyes, 1998; Diener et al., 1999).

Subjective well-being	**Emotional well-being**	*Positive affect*	The participant's self-reporting of positive moods and emotions either in an educational context or connected to the experience of higher education, for example: ▪ Happiness ▪ Joy ▪ Elation ▪ Contentment ▪ Pride ▪ Affection ▪ Ecstasy
		Negative affect	The participant's self-reporting of negative moods and emotions either in an educational context or connected to the experience of higher education, for example: ▪ Guilt and shame ▪ Sadness ▪ Anxiety and worry ▪ Anger ▪ Stress ▪ Depression ▪ Envy
		Life satisfaction	The participant's evaluation of their educational experience and evidence that it influences their overall evaluation of their life satisfaction. This may entail: ▪ Satisfaction with current life ▪ Desire to change life ▪ Significant others' views of one's life
	Eudaimonic well-being	*Psychological well-being*	The participant's perception of the influence of higher education on their positive functioning, including: ▪ Self-acceptance ▪ Positive relations with others ▪ Autonomy ▪ Environmental mastery ▪ Purpose in life ▪ Personal growth
		Social well-being	The participant's perception of the influence of higher education on the extent to which they function well within their broader community/society. This includes: ▪ Social integration ▪ Social contributions ▪ Social coherence ▪ Social actualisation ▪ Social acceptance

5. Methodology

5.1 Hermeneutic phenomenology

To examine participants' experiences and perceptions, this study employs the methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology within a constructivist ontology. Hermeneutic phenomenology combines the two traditions of hermeneutics and phenomenology. As in phenomenology, participants' lived experiences are examined and rich descriptions of their lifeworld sought, making it appropriate for constructing a context-specific understanding of well-being for a relatively overlooked group (White, 2016: 26-27; Creswell and Poth, 2018: 39). This inductive approach is combined with the interpretive aspect of hermeneutic analysis, in which the researcher seeks to understand the participants' lifeworld (Cole, 2010: 1). While other forms of phenomenology encourage the researcher to suspend their preconceptions, hermeneutic phenomenology acknowledges that the researcher cannot be a neutral observer and grants them a more active role in co-constructing knowledge: the researcher and the participant work together to understand the phenomenon in question (Koch, 1995: 835; Lauterbach, 2018: 2883-2884). While participants' lived experience remains paramount, it interacts with the researcher's "preunderstanding", combining inductive and deductive reasoning (Heidegger, 1962: 191). This is a fruitful combination, devoting greater attention to the voices of those affected than purely deductive or quantitative methodologies, while also integrating insights from previous literature to understand the meaning of participants' experiences. As such, the thesis draws connections between lived experience of higher education and theoretical understandings of subjective well-being to analyse how the former influences the latter.

5.1.1 Positionality

As hermeneutic phenomenology acknowledges the role of the researcher's preunderstandings, it does not require the researcher to entirely "bracket" their prior experience (Heidegger, 1962; Lauterbach, 2018: 2889). Nevertheless, the researcher should be self-reflective and position themselves within the research (Gadamer, 1976). As a former teacher, I approached the research

with personal preunderstandings of the link between education and well-being. While aware of the challenges of academic pressure, I have seen education transform young people by equipping them with personal and interpersonal skills, and my commitment to equal access to education as a fundamental human right drew me to this research topic. I also place great value on my own higher education. To ensure that this bias did not unduly influence the research, I critically self-reflected with the help of a research diary throughout data collection. Repeatedly examining interview texts and drawings during data analysis also ensured that participants' lived experiences took precedence.

5.2 Sample

Hermeneutic phenomenology prioritises in-depth exploration of a relatively small group of participants. The group's recommended size varies between three and fifteen (Creswell and Poth, 2018: 79). For this study, various considerations influenced the exact size of the sample. First, different perspectives were sought to enhance understanding of the phenomenon (Moser and Korstjens, 2018: 11). This included efforts to maintain gender balance and include different higher education institutions and courses of study. Second, the concept of theoretical saturation was considered. The number of participants was not, therefore, pre-determined; interviews continued until participants raised no new broad themes related to well-being. Consistent with hermeneutic phenomenology's emphasis on rich individual accounts and the predominance of lived experience, however, complete data saturation was not sought (van Manen et al., 2016; Saunders et al., 2018). Instead, saturation was understood to be when further data collection becomes "counter-productive" and "new" data would not contribute to overall findings (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: 136).

Non-random purposeful sampling was used to establish a group of participants that met the requirements of the research (Creswell and Poth, 2018: 137–139): Syrian with refugee status, currently undertaking studies at a higher education institution in Amman. Current students were selected to ensure that participants could discuss their experiences in detail. The final number of participants was 12. This included five females and seven males aged 19–36, eight courses of study, and five higher education institutions (Table 5.1). Although enrolment of female Syrian

refugees in higher education is approximately half that of males (Krafft et al., 2018: 22), they were over-represented in the sample to ensure that the experience of female Syrians was given consideration. All participants attended institutions designated as universities, but half undertook courses categorised as TVET.

Table 5.1. Summary of participants.

Pseudonym	Institution	Gender	Age	Course of study	Language of interview
Aya	Amman Arab University	Female	24	Master's in Marketing	Arabic
Fatima	Al-Zaytoonah University	Female	20	Bachelor's in Pharmacy	Arabic
Jamal	German Jordanian University	Male	30	Master's in Computer Engineering	English
Karam	Luminus Technical University College (SAE Institute)	Male	20	Bachelor's in Filmmaking	Arabic
Iman	Luminus Technical University College	Female	20	Diploma in Hotel Management	Arabic
Yara	Luminus Technical University College	Female	20	Diploma in Hotel Management	Arabic
Mahdi	Luminus Technical University College	Male	19	Diploma in Hotel Management	Arabic
Rima	Luminus Technical University College	Female	19	Diploma in Fashion Design	Arabic
Qasim	Luminus Technical University College	Male	19	Diploma in Culinary Arts	Arabic
Farid	University of Jordan	Male	25	Professional Diploma in Refugee and Forced Migration Studies	English
Hussein	University of Jordan	Male	31	Professional Diploma in Refugee and Forced Migration Studies	English
Nabil	University of Jordan	Male	36	Professional Diploma in Refugee and Forced Migration Studies	English

5.3 Research methods

The study used in-depth, semi-structured interviews with Syrian students with refugee status. Interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. Qualitative interviews gave participants the opportunity to provide information-rich descriptions of their lived experience and its connection to their well-being. To ensure depth of detail, the interview elicited two types of responses. First, the participant completed a drawing. Second, the participant and the researcher engaged in a semi-structured dialogue or "hermeneutic interview" (Cole, 2010: 3).

5.3.1 Drawings

After introductory questions to build rapport, the interview started with an exercise in which participants were asked to draw a picture showing what their experience of higher education has been like. Participants were then asked to explain their drawing and elaborate on the meaning of specific aspects relevant to the concept of subjective well-being.

Drawings have been shown to be an effective means of building "a path towards feelings and emotions" (Kearney and Hyle, 2004: 361), facilitating internal reflection which acts as a catalyst for further articulation in the interview. This reflection encouraged participants to focus on the most salient feature of their experience or perception (Nossiter and Biberman, 1990: 15) and tapped into the ability of visual art to "disclose an understanding of both ourselves and of our being in the world in an immediate, unique and revelatory manner" (Davey, 1999: 5). Moreover, the drawings enabled participants to be more active in determining the direction of the interview. As researcher-generated displays have been shown to be more effective for studies seeking to compare across participants (Meyer, 1991), an outline was provided that participants were asked to imagine as their university (Appendix A) but with minimal detail so as to allow participants freedom to shape their own responses. Participants then led the subsequent discussion of how the drawing can be interpreted, enabling co-construction of knowledge in the interview.

5.3.2 Hermeneutic interview

While phenomenological research traditionally favours unstructured interviews, hermeneutic phenomenology employs the concept of a semi-structured "hermeneutic interview" (Cole, 2010: 3). This style promotes a conversational dialogue that builds understanding and supports a "fusion of horizons" (Koch, 1995: 835) between researcher and participant. Researchers bring their preunderstanding to the interview in order to guide the interpretive process (McCance and Mcilfatrick, 2008: 235); the theoretical understanding of subjective well-being was therefore used to establish an interview guide with sample questions covering key thematic areas (Appendix B). While conversation was guided by responses from the participant, interview questions elicited responses on varied aspects of subjective well-being (both emotional and eudaimonic). Questions remained broad, however, to allow participants to construct the meaning of the situation, in line with a constructivist approach (Creswell and Poth, 2018: 38-39).

5.3.3 Connections between analytical framework and research methods

Table 5.2, below, outlines how lived experiences were captured in a way that enabled analysis through the lens of subjective well-being.

Table 5.2. Connections between analytical framework and research methods.

			Drawing *(Possible features of drawings)*	**Interview** *(Example questions)*
Subjective well-being	**Emotional well-being**	***Positive affect*** Self-reporting of positive moods and emotions.	▪ Objects or facial expressions depicting positive affect. ▪ Participant's oral description of drawing refers to positive affect.	▪ How would you describe the emotions you felt when you first started higher education? Has this changed over time? ▪ What, if anything, do you enjoy about university?
		Negative affect Self-reporting of negative moods and emotions.	▪ Objects or facial expressions depicting negative affect. ▪ Oral description of drawing refers to negative affect.	▪ How would you describe the emotions you felt when you first started higher education? Has this changed over time? ▪ What, if anything, do you not enjoy about university?
		Life satisfaction Evaluation of educational experience and overall life satisfaction[7].	▪ Objects or facial expressions depicting satisfaction or dissatisfaction. ▪ Oral description refers to satisfaction.	▪ Overall, how do you feel about your educational experience? ▪ How important is higher education to you?
	Eudaimonic well-being	***Psychological well-being*** Perception of the influence of higher education on their positive functioning.	▪ Objects depicting individual functioning (see Table 4.1). ▪ Oral description refers to positive functioning.	▪ Do you feel you have gained important skills from university? ▪ Does your university experience contribute to your personal goals?
		Social well-being Perception of the influence of higher education on ability to function in broader community/society.	▪ Objects depicting community/society (see Table 4.2). ▪ Oral description refers to functioning in broader community/society.	▪ How would you describe your relationships with other students/teachers? ▪ When you have difficulties at university, where do you turn for support?

[7] Participants were not explicitly asked to discuss their overall life satisfaction, but where connections were made between higher education and general life satisfaction, these were taken into account.

5.4 Ethical considerations

The research adheres to the information, consent, confidentiality, and use requirements outlined in the LUMID Ethical Guidelines, reflected in the information sheet and consent form for participants (Appendix C). Additional measures were incorporated in recognition that research among refugees requires special attention due to their political, legal, and often social marginalisation (Jacobsen and Landau, 2003). There was also, however, a need to recognise participants' agency and avoid "the danger of treating the other as 'needy', the passive recipient of our care and concern" (Block et al., 2013: vii).

All participants were over the age of 18. The independent nature of the research, as no organisations were formally involved, reduced the likelihood of dependence. Nevertheless, in light of power dynamics present in researcher-participant relationships (Funder, 2005), the participants' freedom to withdraw and not answer questions was emphasised throughout the process. Participants were not asked or expected to talk about prior experiences or their personal lives outside of education to avoid undue intrusion (Refugee Studies Centre, 2007: 164-5). The research also focused on the participants' perceptions of their experiences, avoiding the potentially harmful effect of participants feeling that they are being compared to a norm (Melville, n.d.).

Qualitative methods, and particularly phenomenology, are a valued means of integrating sensitive interviewing methods for refugees (Schweitzer and Steel, 2008). By ensuring the centrality of participant voices, they also reduce the risk of non-recognition or co-option of the group's experiences (Block et al., 2013). To ensure that this was done effectively, a pilot interview was undertaken with a university student who does not have refugee status, after which the interview guide was revised.

Participants could choose to conduct the interview in Arabic or English. While the implications of being a non-Arabic speaker reliant on a translator are discussed in Section 5.6, this option enabled participants to choose the language with which they felt most comfortable. The engagement of participants in directing the interview also promoted a more participatory form of research, reducing risks creating of a power imbalance in a research setting (Block et al., 2013). Upon completing the interview, participants were given a pamphlet detailing psychosocial support

services that they can access if they would like to discuss further any issues raised in the interview (as recommended by researchers of subjective well-being such as Ralph et al., 2011). Participants were also provided with contact details and informed of the option to withdraw their data.

5.5 Data analysis

To ensure thorough understanding of participant experiences, data was analysed in several stages. First, the interviews were transcribed. This facilitated repeated readings of participant answers and ensured that the exact language of participants took precedence rather than "the intuitive glosses that we might place on what people say in interviews" (Bryman, 2012: 482). In the second stage of analysis, the transcripts were reviewed, together with participant drawings and notes from the research diary. The qualitative analysis programme NVivo 12 was used to organise the data based on key features of participants' lived experience. "Significant statements" representing participants' experience were selected and subsequently categorised into codes in NVivo, supporting the process of establishing the essence of the phenomenon (Creswell and Poth, 2018: 82). In the case of participant drawings, this involved pairing significant statements in the interview with elements of the drawing.

The third phase consisted of hermeneutic analysis of the data. This followed the "hermeneutic circle", whereby the texts and drawings were reviewed repeatedly, moving between "parts" of the experience to the "whole" of the experience, to identify patterns present in all interviews (Hellman, 2016: 76–77). The theory of subjective well-being was used to support interpretation of participant experiences. However, findings that contradicted theoretical assumptions were also analysed and are discussed in Section 7.2.

5.6 Limitations

The research is constrained by several limitations. First, as a privileged white female from a European university, I entered the research from a position of power (Funder, 2005: 5). To reduce the risks inherent in such a power imbalance, I consulted participants regarding their preferred

interview setting, but limitations were nevertheless present in all cases. Some interviews were conducted at the participant's home. While beneficial as a comfortable environment, the proximity of family may have led participants to moderate their responses. Interviews with students from Luminus Technical University College took place at the university campus; in some ways a more neutral environment, but that university representatives facilitated my presence may still have contributed to a power imbalance in the interview. Although the presence of a translator may have eased the cultural barrier, an unspoken relationship of power remained present (Funder, 2005: 5–7). I remained reflexive throughout (Sultana, 2007), but was ultimately unable to overcome entirely the risk of distortions in both data collection and analysis (Funder, 2005: 5–7).

A second limitation of the data concerns language. Eight of the twelve interviews were undertaken with a translator. From a constructivist standpoint, the translator was engaged with the construction of meaning during the interview (Temple and Young, 2004: 164). This introduced a mediator into the data collection process, and the inability to access the exact terms used by both translators and participants risked reducing how far the "hermeneutic of language" could be analysed (Cole, 2010: 3). Using a non-verbal research method within the interview partially mitigated this, but the term 'well-being' raised further issues. Upon discussing the term with my translators, I found that 'well-being' did not translate well into Arabic and, to avoid confusion, proceeded to ask questions that related to well-being without using the specific term (Appendix B). While valuable in accessing the essence of participants' experiences rather than preconceived notions they may attach to the concept, this limited how far participants could explicitly discuss interpretations of their well-being.

A third potential limitation of the data can be found in the research participants. As current students and scholarship holders, they are not representative of most Syrian refugees. A fuller examination of the relationship between higher education and well-being would incorporate the voices of refugees *not* attending university, enabling a comparison between the two groups. A larger sample size, perhaps employing a mixed methods approach, would also help to establish whether these findings are more widely generalisable. This would, however, likely entail departing from a constructivist ontology and require greater time and material resources beyond the bounds of this thesis.

Finally, hermeneutic phenomenology presented methodological challenges. By combining aspects of hermeneutics and phenomenology, the methodology contains tension between capturing the essence of a phenomenon, which in phenomenological terms is something universal, alongside the hermeneutic understanding that our way of being in the world is connected to our own understanding, and so is not universal (Kakkori, 2009). This tension was present in data analysis, in which participants' varied responses—discussing the same themes but presenting different experiences—could not always be reduced to an essence. By way of a solution, participants' individual interpretations are preserved within the key themes, but tension between universality and individuality was never fully resolved. A different methodology, examining individual case studies in greater detail, would enable fuller analysis of how participants' experiences varied by characteristics such as gender, socioeconomic position, or other demographic factors.

Despite these limitations, the data gave rise to various insights that are outlined in the next section.

6. Results

The results of the data analysis are explained in this section, with emphasis placed on participants' words and drawings. Participant pseudonyms are used throughout when referring to interview data. Three key themes emerged regarding how higher education influences participants' well-being:

a) Higher education as a source of meaning and purpose;
b) Higher education as a place of important relationships;
c) Higher education as a source of stress.

These themes are discussed in terms of the elements of subjective well-being to which they relate, and illuminate the "essence" of participants' well-being in higher education (Creswell and Poth, 2018: 82).

To provide further understanding of how the participants perceived the relative importance of these themes—in hermeneutic terms, how the "parts" relate to the "whole" (Hellman, 2016: 76–77)—the participants' overall judgements of their university experiences are then discussed. These results help to establish the total influence of higher education on participants' subjective well-being.

6.1 Key aspects of subjective well-being in higher education

6.1.1 Higher education as a source of meaning and purpose

The perception of higher education as a meaningful activity was common to all participants, highlighting its contribution to their eudaimonic well-being and particularly their psychological well-being. Participants especially valued the ability to "keep moving" (Farid), both in a general sense and in working towards specific goals.

For participants, the ability to "keep moving" was a source of purpose. It was an opportunity to do something they perceived as valuable—that is, obtaining education—and avoid the alternative path of inactivity, which two participants linked to depression (Farid and Jamal). Participants also

expressed a sense of environmental mastery that they derived from keeping moving: it provided a means of managing their life situation and future prospects. Hussein linked this to an Arabic proverb: “You must do, and wait.” This, he explained, is how he views his university experience—while it may not bring an immediate award, it may benefit him in future. “Do what you can do, and wait your opportunity,” he added. Viewed in these terms, “keeping moving” not only provides meaning and purpose in the short-term, but enables participants to envision a future and the capacity to manage future life situations.

Participants’ sense of purpose was enhanced by the feeling that they were working towards a goal. For some participants, completing university was itself a goal and they derived a sense of satisfaction from achieving it. For Hussein, the feeling of achieving his goal sustained him despite the logistical difficulties of attending classes, including a five-hour bus journey each way. His motto, which he repeats to those who question his decision, is: “I’m ready to go to China walking in order to [make] my dreams come true.” Farid and Aya associated academic achievements with feelings of happiness, therefore drawing a connection to their emotional well-being. Both depicted their experiences as a journey and noted their graduation from their bachelor’s degree as a high point, with Farid showing pride in his high grade (Figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1. Farid (left) and Aya (right) depict happiness when graduating from their bachelor’s degree. Farid’s grade (3.18/4 grade point average [GPA] – Very good) is written in green next to his drawing.

Participants who emphasised university as a step towards achieving future goals highlighted the importance of developing valuable skills, indicating self-actualisation. Iman's drawing focused on the transferable skills she has gained (Figure 6.2), while Aya and Fatima valued self-confidence and interpersonal skills developed at university. Participants undertaking vocational courses emphasised employment-related skills. For Rima, studying fashion design, the key benefit was that "our teachers are really the elite of the field", giving her a competitive edge. Yara and Iman, studying hotel management, felt that they have gained skills and experience relevant to their future careers. For Karam, who had professional experience prior to undertaking his diploma in filmmaking, the opportunity to pursue his studies has improved "my knowledge, my experience, my professionalism" more than practical experience alone could: "this proper education is really leading me towards something big".

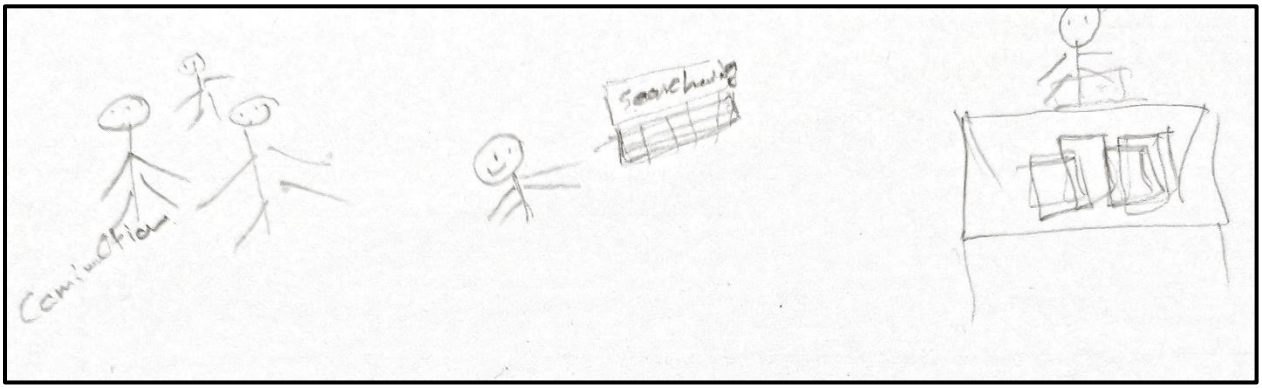

Figure 6.2. Iman's drawing, showing the skills she has developed at university: communication, research, and managing her workload.

Some participants discussed the same sense of personal growth, but instead expressed it as the ability to obtain specific qualifications required for future goals. Jamal needed a good grade in his Master's to apply for a PhD, for example, while Qasim believed his British-certified diploma necessary for further education abroad. For others, the feeling of working towards a goal was discussed in more abstract terms of achieving future "success" (Hussein). Rima pictured her education as a "ladder of creativity" helping her to become "a star in [her] field", while Karam sees university as an elevator "taking [him] to higher levels in life" (Figure 6.3). Hussein and Nabil explained that, while displacement had previously derailed their life paths, higher education had

enabled them to develop new goals. As Hussein put it, “Dreams are like a person, and the war killed him.” University is, however, rekindling his dreams: “I tell my family that my remedy is to go to university.” His evocative metaphors highlight the value he places on his university education, in contrast to the more neutral language with which he discussed logistical challenges. In all cases, participants drew a connection between two aspects of eudaimonic well-being: having a goal (purpose in life) and the feeling of working towards a goal (personal growth). The satisfaction they derive from this also implies self-acceptance, while the independence they derive from it illustrates autonomy—two key aspects of psychological well-being.

Figure 6.3. Rima (left) pictures her education as a “ladder” to success, while Karam (right) views it as an elevator.

Two key limitations arise regarding how far a sense of meaning and purpose in pursuing higher education contributed to participants’ well-being, however. First, how often participants reported high emotional well-being alongside the eudaimonic well-being discussed above varied depending on enjoyment of their course of study. Thus, a sense of meaning and purpose did not necessarily generate positive affect. Yara felt her degree was important for achieving her goal of obtaining employment abroad, but derived no positive affect from it: “I don't really like the course of study so I feel that this is just an assignment—that I need to get it done with to obtain my degree and that's it.” Qasim initially derived positive affect from his academic achievement, but positive affect

(happiness, excitement) evolved into negative affect (boredom, disappointment) when he stopped enjoying his course (Figure 6.4). Nevertheless, he maintained a sense of purpose: "I'm doing this for a goal." These examples of negative affect combined with eudaimonic well-being indicate the importance of enjoying daily educational activities. For participants who did not enjoy their course, eudaimonic well-being did not generate emotional well-being.

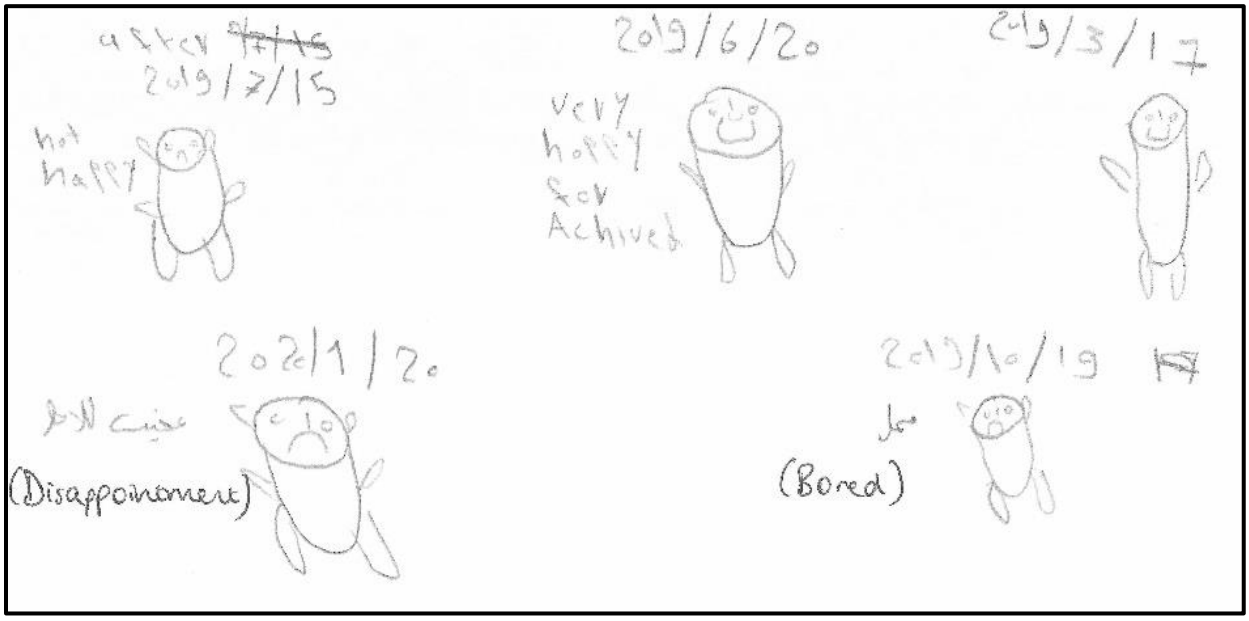

Figure 6.4. Qasim's drawing: a sense of achievement initially generated positive affect, but this evolved into negative affect due to lack of enjoyment of his subject.

Second, concerns among participants about barriers to achieving their goals limited the eudaimonic well-being they experienced. Some students studying for diplomas expressed concern that their qualification was insufficient. Nabil was unsure that his "very limited" diploma would qualify him to work in his chosen field, while Iman noted that her studies were "a great step" but "still a diploma" and so required further study to obtain a bachelor's degree. This intersected with concerns, expressed by the majority of participants, that wider conditions in Jordan would prevent them from putting their education to use. The dominant concern was the difficulty of obtaining employment as a Syrian in Jordan. Nabil explained that university provided only temporary relief; getting a "good job" equal to his qualifications will be difficult. This harmed the emotional well-being of many participants. Farid had already experienced unemployment prior to his diploma and

recalled being “very depressed”. Iman, for whom studying hotel management has otherwise been positive, explained how career-related concerns negatively affected her emotional well-being:

> The thing that is mostly pulling me down—the one thing that is a disappointment for me because of my refugee status is that after I started studying I learned the information that as a Syrian refugee, as a person with a refugee status, I can't legally get a job at a five-star hotel.

If she cannot get a job, she feels her diploma will be “pointless”. Even so, she expressed determination and confidence that she will succeed. Her sense of direction, an expression of eudaimonic well-being, remained high despite concerns about the future.

6.1.2 Higher education as a place of important relationships

All participants discussed relationships with their peers and teachers at university as a key part of their experience, providing insights into both their emotional and eudaimonic well-being. When discussing individual friendships, participants exhibited a key aspect of psychological well-being: positive relations with others. However, when reviewing their place in the wider community, and therefore social well-being, the picture became mixed and some participants reported difficulties integrating into university.

The opportunity to form friendships was one of the most important aspects of participants’ experiences. Friendships featured in participant drawings (Figure 6.5) and were regularly discussed as examples of warm, trusting interpersonal relations, indicating psychological well-being. Participants described the value of gaining emotional support from their friends: it helped them navigate the stresses and strains of academic life, adapt to a new environment, and build relationships with people from different backgrounds. Friendships were also associated with enjoyment of university, demonstrating emotional well-being. Fatima felt that “the best thing about university is being with friends”, while Qasim explained, “I have a good group of friends and I enjoy my time with them.” For Iman, friendships were central to a “happy and healthy environment” at university.

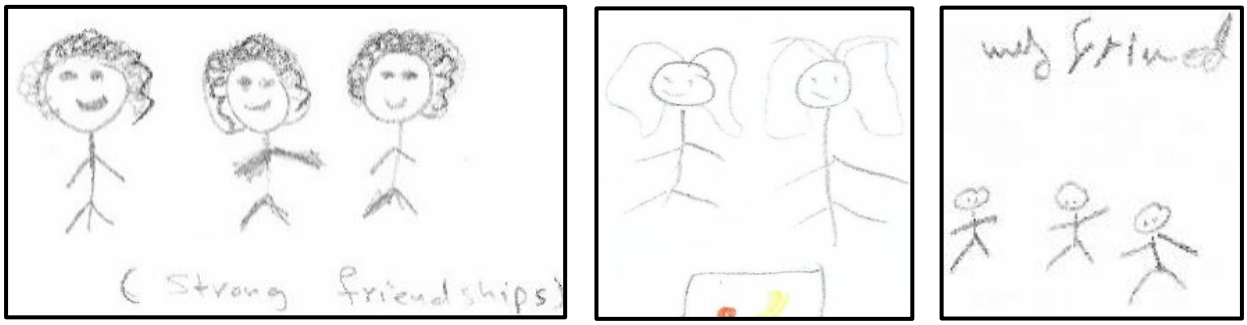

Figure 6.5. Aya (left), Fatima (middle), and Mahdi (right) draw their friends as an important part of their university experience.

For some participants, the opportunity to build meaningful relationships also supported social well-being. This was discernible where participants expressed feelings of belonging to the university community. Iman and Hussein both referred to their relationships with their teachers and classmates in familial terms: "It's not a relation between a student and a teacher… it's not a relation of colleagues, it's a relation of family, brothers and sisters" (Hussein). Fatima also explained that she felt "at home" because no one at university differentiates between Jordanians and Syrians. For Jamal, this was the result of the good "ethics" and "policy" of his university, which he feels focuses on integrating refugees.

Clear limiting factors, however, led six participants to profess mixed or negative feelings about integration into the university community. Two participants cited ideological differences. Nabil felt that he could not openly discuss his opinions at university. Specifically citing his opposition to child marriage, he said, "I can integrate, but I cannot think or I cannot talk or appear everything I think about." Yara also discussed challenges she has faced with the "mentality" of her fellow students, particularly regarding gender stereotypes: "I'm treated more often than not negatively because of that, because it's the regular or the typical Arab mentality that as a girl you should be 123, you cannot be yourself."

For two participants, the key factor was nationality or refugee status. Rima described bullying and prejudice she has experienced because of her refugee status and scholarship:

> I'm a refugee on a scholarship and most of the people studying here, they're studying—they're paying for their own tuition and they have this look towards refugee or scholarship students that "I can do whatever I want with my money, I can just be whoever I want." … It's a bit of a challenge because you feel that you're intimidated by people who have insecurities.

Qasim explained the challenge of interacting with fellow students who "have no understanding of dealing with people from different backgrounds, people from different nationality". This was accompanied by different treatment within the institution. He described how students on scholarships could not register for courses at the same time as their peers: "After everyone registers and the registration closes, then it opens for us." As well as affecting his social well-being, this restricted his choice of courses and generated negative affect.

For others, feelings of integration evolved over time. Karam, for example, explained that he initially struggled but learned to accept people from different backgrounds: "This improved me as a person and now I can be friends with them even if they're different from me." Mahdi initially faced "major difficulties" communicating with both fellow students and teachers, but gradually integrated. While further highlighting the importance of relationships as a key determinant of well-being in a university context, these examples demonstrate the challenges faced by students with refugee status. For most participants, their main source of support for dealing with these challenges lay not within the university but with their families, usually their mothers. This led Rima, Farid, and Qasim to propose increased psychosocial support within universities.

6.1.3 Higher education as a source of stress

University-related stress was a common feature of participants' experiences. In addition to concerns about the future and difficulties integrating, discussed above, obtaining a scholarship and the demands of academic work were the most-cited causes of stress. These sources of stress often intersected with other logistical challenges faced by the participants due to their wider living conditions and experiences of displacement.

All participants received scholarships that either partially or entirely covered their tuition fees and referred to it unprompted, suggesting that financial support is important—or even imperative—for their educational experience. While two participants linked scholarships to positive affect in their drawings, they were more commonly discussed in negative terms. This linked to concerns about the high cost of university education for international students in Jordan. Accordingly, many participants stated that their ability to attend university or their choice of course had been determined by their scholarship. The high stakes associated with scholarships generated stress for participants. Although Farid described his scholarship as a "gift", he explained the negative emotions he experienced due to difficulties obtaining it: he was "depressed" when rejected three times without explanation. For Jamal, the most stressful part of his Master's degree was preparing for an English language exam for scholarship purposes, without which he could not afford his education. This stress was exacerbated by the fact that English was new to him; it is not required by Syrian universities. While valuing his scholarship, he also explained that time restrictions on his scholarship prevented him from writing a thesis, which would have been beneficial for his future academic prospects. Moreover, he felt that many Syrians with the means to pay tuition fees are awarded scholarships. In his view, this lack of means-testing leads to inconsistent numbers of scholarships each year, which is a further source of stress for those who rely on financial support.

While most participants discussed the stress of obtaining financial support in the past tense, for two participants financial concerns remained prominent. Mahdi explained that his family is under financial pressure due to the cost of living in Jordan, and the costs associated with attending university add to this pressure: "It just added more to my life expenses." Hassan's long journey to university is not only "difficult" but also "very expensive." He recounted a story of how this affects both his emotional and material well-being:

> Sometimes I feel ashamed to go to my friend to sleep in his house, I go to mosque and sleep there without a cover over me in order to go. Especially in winter—last week, the week before there was a storm. I went to the bus station there was no buses. I have just 3 JD—3 Jordanian dinar you know, it's not enough to go to hotel. And not enough to take a taxi to the house of my friend.

While Mahdi and Hussein's scholarships covered their university tuition, the financial support was insufficient to reduce the stress associated with other university-related costs.

Increased negative affect due to the demands of academic work was also a common experience. Aya's initial happiness gave way to stress when her workload increased (Figure 6.6). Jamal recalled "very stressful" exams, while Iman discussed the emotional effects of trying to complete many assignments at once:

> Sometimes I have to spend two full days—eat, sleep, work, eat, sleep, work, eat, sleep, work, and all of my work is in front of a computer laptop… this pressure for me is maybe one of the worst things at this university.

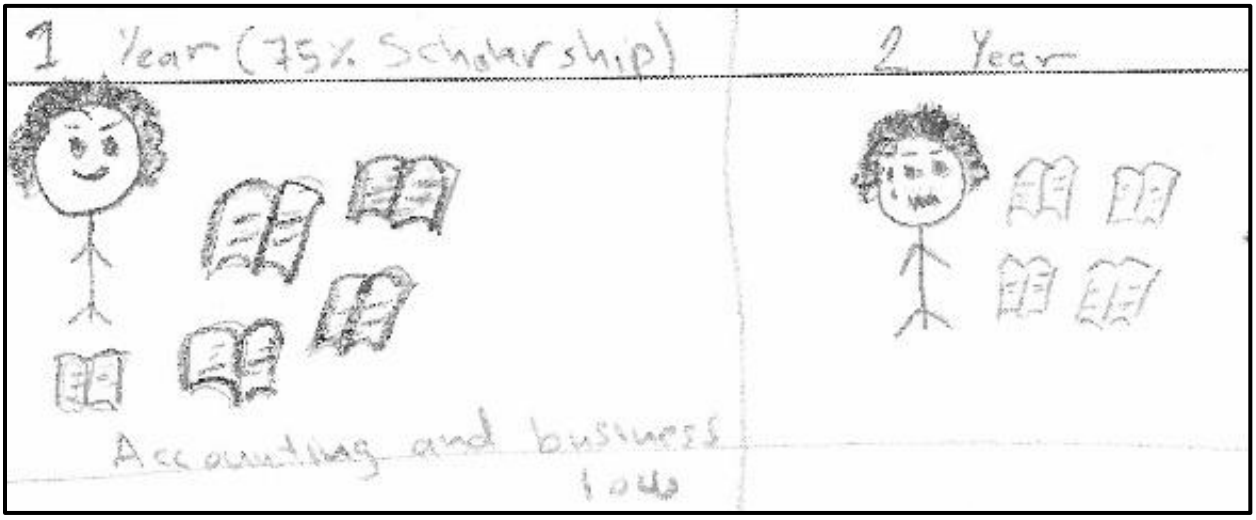

Figure 6.6. Aya's drawing depicts the changing emotions caused by her workload.

While struggling with workload may be a common experience for university students, for the participants it intersected with other pressures resulting from displacement. Aya recounted the difficulty of "catching up" after a two-year break from university when she left Syria. Hussein faced the stress of trying to obtain his university certificates from Syria. Fatima described adjusting to a new university while also being away from her parents and settling into life in Jordan. For Rima, experiencing mixed-gender education for the first time was stressful and she was "fearful" of the adjustment.

Experiences of university-related stress described by participants were not straightforwardly negative, however. Iman explained that her workload is hard, but overall she loves her subject. Aya stated that, while the experience of readjusting to university was stressful, “the hard work eventually paid off”. This suggests that her decline in emotional well-being was later balanced by a sense of personal growth, a key aspect of psychological well-being. For sources of stress outside of workload, however, negative affect remained present: Rima, for example, continued to struggle with the differences between refugee and non-refugee students, only reporting that she “became stronger dealing with this”.

6.2 The overall influence of higher education on subjective well-being

6.2.1 Positive judgements of university experiences

Each participant expressed positive and negative aspects of subjective well-being in relation to their experience of higher education, revealing a complex relationship between their external environment and their internal life. Participants’ perceptions of well-being were also rarely static: many highlighted changes over time and often captured this in their drawings (Figures 6.4, 6.6 and 6.7). However, when evaluating their overall experience, the majority expressed a positive opinion. Seven gave a definitively positive judgement and two said it was mostly positive, while two gave a neutral answer and one said it was negative.

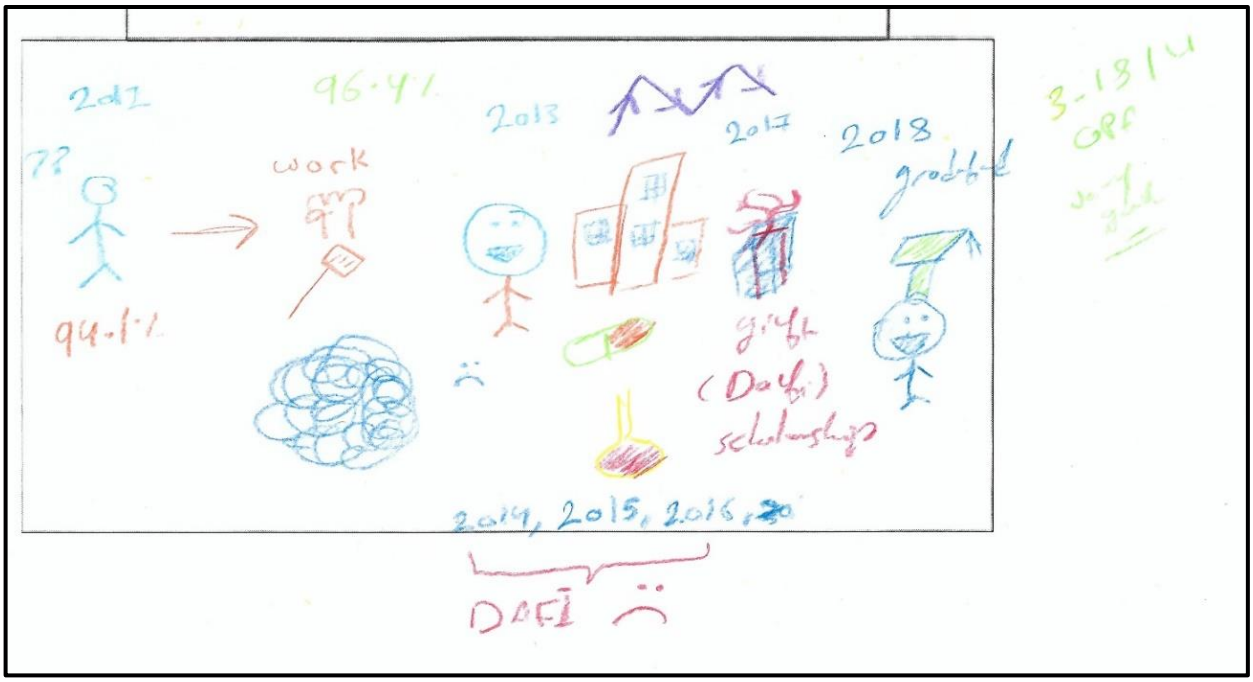

Figure 6.7. Farid illustrates his experience of higher education as a series of significant steps, with a different level of well-being associated with each step.

The high number of positive or largely positive judgements indicates satisfaction amongst the participants, signifying emotional well-being. The most-cited reasons for satisfaction were feelings of personal growth and achieving goals, highlighting a connection to eudaimonic well-being and particularly psychological well-being. This was also reflected in the low number of participants that expressed a desire to change their university experience: although facing difficulties, they felt the experience was worth it to help them reach their goal. Hussein, for example, discussed the challenges of travelling five hours by bus each way to attend university and his fears that he would be unable to get a job after graduating. Nevertheless, he remained profoundly happy about his ability to pursue higher education because it was his "dream". He expressed this sentiment both in his drawing (Figure 6.8) and his interview: "I think Arabic language or English language is not enough to express everything—we need more 10 or 20 language to express the feelings to be a student in Jordan."

Figure 6.8. Hussein's drawing of a heart-eyed emoji, showing his high levels of positive affect. The text reads, "Happy in Jordan universities."

The participants who gave neutral judgements, Yara and Nabil, felt that higher education contributed positively to their futures. However, for Nabil, his judgement remained neutral because he did not have a "luxury of choice." He took the opportunity because it was the only one available to him, representing a lack of autonomy. Yara remained neutral because she did not enjoy her subject or feel integrated within the university. As shown in her drawing (Figure 6.9), she said:

> I know it's the way – it's the appropriate tool for me to travel outside, to reunite with my siblings… Outside I have my moments; my happy moments, my not very happy moments. But in the campus, completely neutral. Not much feelings towards it.

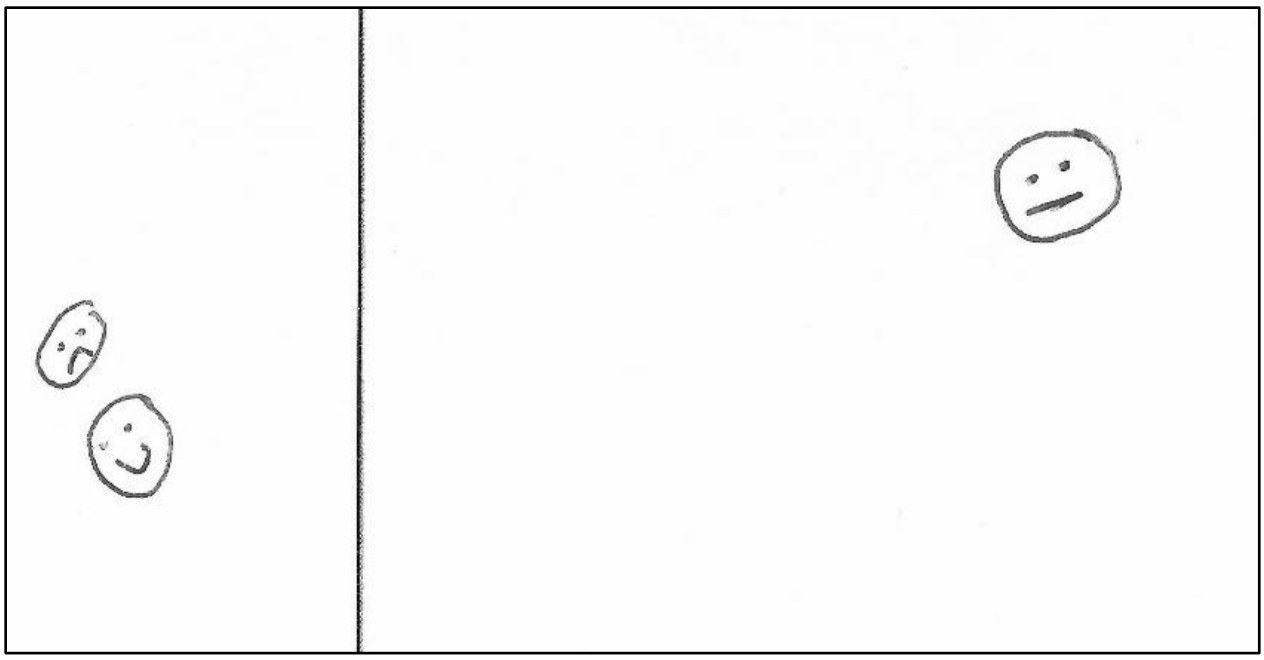

Figure 6.9. Yara's drawing illustrates her "neutral" judgement of her experience. The right-hand side represents life at university; the left-hand side shows life outside.

For the student who gave a negative answer, Mahdi, the key reason was the financial cost of university:

> Usually on a daily scale I need to spend five to six JDs [Jordanian Dinars] just being at the university and that is making the negatives more than the positives for me when I put them to scale.

While he derived satisfaction from his studies and believed they would be "useful", the challenge of covering his costs and the negative affect associated with this outweighed the positive effects of his experience.

6.2.2 A complex relationship between higher education and life satisfaction

While participants were not asked about their life satisfaction outside of education, all related their higher education to their wider experience of Jordan. In doing so, they provided insights into how university influences their well-being more generally. In addition to adding another layer of understanding regarding life satisfaction, this further illuminates participants' social well-being. For some participants, university opened the way to integration into wider society. Jamal has developed a network that will help him in his professional life, while Qasim appreciated his improved social life as a newcomer to Jordanian society. Karam knew Jordanian society well before resettling in the country, but nevertheless valued improved integration in terms of legal rights:

> Having student status allowed me to have more rights, more basic rights. I can now obtain a driver's licence, I can get a car if I can afford it. I can travel. ... Because without having a student status, I didn't have any of these rights and I basically couldn't do anything here.

How far university supported social integration was, however, more limited for participants that had prior experience of Jordanian society. Two participants were born in Jordan (Rima; Farid), while others lived in Jordan for a number of years prior to starting higher education (Aya; Hussein) or visited frequently (Karam). Other participants perceived their social integration negatively for reasons outside of higher education, most commonly difficulties in obtaining employment. For some, low social well-being was also present in their perception of Jordanian society (social coherence) and its trajectory (social actualisation). Mahdi, for example, explained his negative perception of how the social world in Jordan operates:

> It's a society or it's a market that is built around who you know, who's your *wasta*[8], who's your influence, who's the person that can affiliate you to get certain jobs—it's not your qualifications. And besides that, no national ID means you're not going to get anywhere in Jordan.

[8] *Wasta* is an Arabic term that loosely translates to 'nepotism' or 'favouritism'. It refers to the common use of an individual network or connections to secure personal advancement (Feghali, 2014).

Farid described Jordan as a country with “many pressures—refugees, hard economic situation” and felt “the situation is getting harder and harder”. While, for some, higher education would equip them with skills to better manage these conditions, these statements reflect low social well-being that university alone could not address.

Due to their negative judgement of conditions in Jordan, almost all participants wish to relocate after graduating. Aya, Jamal, Mahdi, and Qasim want to study abroad, while Farid, Hussein, Nabil, and Yara wish to work abroad. Thus, while participants are working towards their goal and are largely satisfied with their university experience, their desire to radically change their life indicates wider dissatisfaction. This raises the question of how far satisfaction with education translates into satisfaction with life more generally. It could suggest that university education raises expectations that the students cannot currently fulfil in Jordan, resulting in dissatisfaction.

Participants’ statements regarding their emotional well-being if they were unable to attend university, however, suggest that the connection between higher education and life satisfaction is, at least in part, positive. Participants explained that not being able to attend university would have a definitively negative impact on their emotional well-being. Karam, for example, said, “without it, I feel that my life would be nothing. It would be just dark.” Mahdi explained, “I think if I stop studying it will definitely be worse, it will definitely not move in the right direction.” These statements indicate that, while university education alone cannot support life satisfaction in the long term, it plays an important role in supporting life satisfaction in the short-term. This is particularly true for participants for whom completing higher education is a goal in itself, predating their displacement. As Aya said, university is “something that I used to dream about ever since I was in Syria, and eventually I achieved this”.

7. Discussion

The research results provide insights into the influence of higher education on well-being that both confirm and add to previous literature on the topic and the theoretical framework of subjective well-being. These implications and how they relate to policy and programming for Syrian refugees are discussed in this section.

7.1 Key findings

Participants' experiences of well-being at university revealed a complex relationship between their material conditions and their internal life. In Section 6.1.1, we saw that higher education generates eudaimonic well-being by giving participants a sense of purpose and the perception that they are achieving their potential (Ryff, 1989: 1071; 2014: 11). This confirms previous literature linking well-being to the pursuit of a goal (Emmons, 1986; Brunstein, 1993). However, the influence of higher education on subjective well-being is limited when students do not enjoy their course or feel unable to achieve their goals. This highlights the importance of a goal feeling achievable (Emmons, 1986; Brunstein, 1993), but also the value of enjoying educational activities for their own sake, as expressed by process theorists (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, 2014). In the experience of participants, both enjoyable activities and achievable, meaningful goals are needed to support emotional well-being alongside eudaimonic well-being. The two must therefore be considered together (Magyar and Keyes, 2019).

In 6.1.2, we found that higher education is an opportunity for participants to develop positive relations with others, and this supports the psychological aspect of eudaimonic well-being (Ryff, 1989; 2014). However, integration into the wider university community is restricted by factors such as ideological differences, discrimination, and a lack of institutional support. Higher education's influence on social well-being is therefore limited (Keyes, 1998). This adds further understanding to the challenge of integrating into new educational contexts faced by many refugees (Mangan and Winter, 2017; Grüttner, 2019) and the need for institutional support, a factor also highlighted in high-income contexts (Earnest et al., 2010: 169).

In 6.1.3, we saw that participants' emotional well-being at university is negatively affected by stress. Competition for scholarships, financial concerns, and workload were the main causes. This echoes previous literature on the practical challenges faced by Syrian students in Jordan (El-Ghali and Al-Hawamdeh, 2017; Haj-Yehai and Arar, 2018; Ruisi, 2019), but also sheds light on the emotional impact of such barriers. However, the emotional burden was balanced by a sense of personal growth for some, thus illustrating great value placed on eudaimonic well-being.

In 6.2.1, the overall judgement of participants showed that they often emphasised positive aspects of university. Participants' experiences of well-being can only be generalised to a certain extent: low levels of autonomy, social integration, and enjoyment led two participants to feel neutral, while for one participant the financial burden of university made its overall impact on well-being negative. This reaffirms the value of prioritising an individual's subjective understanding of their experience (OECD, 2013). Overall, however, participants emphasised the boost to eudaimonic well-being derived from personal growth and working towards a goal. That participants felt this despite concerns about barriers to achieving their goals suggests the importance of two aspects of higher education explored in 6.1.1. First, participants derived a profound sense of purpose from being engaged in a meaningful activity. This was important in the short term despite their concerns about long-term opportunities. Second, participants derived confidence and resilience from their education, as revealed by their belief that they would be better equipped to deal with future challenges. These two aspects were perhaps best synthesised in Hussein's reference to an Arabic proverb: "We must do, and wait." Staying occupied is valuable in its own right, but will also equip participants to better respond to opportunities in the long term—even if they must "wait" for suitable opportunities to arise.

In 6.2.2, a consideration of where the domain of higher education sits within participants' broader lives revealed that its influence varies in relation to their prior circumstances and perception of Jordan's socioeconomic conditions. This highlights limits to how far current circumstances and activities shape well-being, in contrast to the view of process theorists (Maslow, 1965; Csikszentmihalyi, 1988), and reaffirms the importance of considering an individual's social well-being (Keyes, 1998). It also indicates the risk of raised expectations for refugees facing socioeconomic challenges, suggesting that having a goal does not equate to positive well-being. Experiences of higher education interact with wider socioeconomic conditions and, to truly

promote well-being, the individual's goals must be achievable. Nevertheless, participants continued to view higher education as a valuable pursuit in contrast to the alternatives, reaffirming previous studies of the negative effect of non-attendance of education on well-being (DeJong et al, 2017).

7.2 Reflections on the theory of subjective well-being

The theory of subjective well-being supported exploration of refugee experiences beyond material conditions. As argued by Magyar and Keyes (2019), examining both eudaimonic and emotional well-being enabled a more complete assessment of well-being in which participants could evaluate how university influences both emotions and functioning. They could also draw contrasts between the two, indicating low emotional well-being alongside high eudaimonic well-being. Exploring subjective well-being qualitatively captured these complexities, as called for by White and Blackmore (2016). However, two notable shortcomings of the theory emerged during the research.

7.2.1 Well-being as a collective concept

First, the theory of subjective well-being focuses solely on the individual. Although social well-being positions the individual within their community, it does not examine the well-being of the whole community. This restricted the exploration of cultural interpretations of well-being (White and Blackmore, 2016), which became clear in participants' comments that framed well-being as a collective concept. For Hussein and Nabil, higher education was important not only for personal growth but for the collective improvement of all Syrian refugees. Nabil explained that divisions between refugees and wider society were a key motivation: "Because [of] that I try to study - I hope can help some people to get the main service." Hussein connected education to the future well-being of Syria as a country:

> We must be educated, we must study. We must go to schools, we must go to universities. In the future we will come back to our country—we must rebuild it with educated minds, not with uneducated minds. If we use uneducated minds we will not rebuild we will destroy it more.

That both Hussein and Nabil study Refugee and Forced Migration Studies may explain their enhanced awareness of their wider community. Nevertheless, their emphasis on collective well-being merits further attention—it extends beyond the theory of social well-being employed above, and warrants greater concern for the well-being of the whole community. Examining this concern from the perspective of refugees themselves extends previous discussions of how higher education can contribute to the future development of refugees' home countries (Kirk and Sherab, 2016).

7.2.2 Well-being as a fixed state

A second limitation of the theory of subjective well-being as applied in this thesis concerns a perceived dissociation between higher education and emotional well-being. Two participants presented their emotional well-being as a relatively fixed, innate quality. Fatima explained that she views herself as a happy, positive person, and is always told so by her family. Qasim believed the same, explaining:

> I am generally a positive person. The people who know me always tell me, "you're a very smiley person." And if I had to study something else, or if I ended up studying something else, I would have still felt positive about it. But the fact that I'm studying this that I like gave me a big push and gives me more of a reason to still be positive.

The final sentence of his comment highlights that enjoyment of his subject has improved his emotional well-being. But his portrayal of himself as a naturally happy person suggests that he feels innate qualities shape his well-being, as genetic and personality disposition theories posit (Diener and Lucas, 1999; Diener et al., 2018).

Dissociation between higher education and well-being was also evident in one of Nabil's statements. When asked about his enjoyment of university, he replied, "I think as a Syrian here we stop feeling", linking this to not having the "luxury of choice". His view indicates the impact of wider stressors in displacement, and the need for specialised support to help mitigate these stressors. This reaffirms the principle of the IASC (2007) that psychosocial support must be considered along a spectrum, and suggests that psychological effects of displacement cannot be captured through the lens of subjective well-being alone.

7.3 Implications for policy and programming

While the results discussed above are from a small sample, the rich data on the lived experience of individuals provides insights that can inform policy and programmes related to higher education for Syrian refugees. The findings show that access to higher education represents a form of protection for Syrian refugees, with the potential to enhance emotional well-being and build resilience by improving their eudaimonic well-being. However, to support this goal, certain conditions must be met.

First, the financial challenges involved in attending university need to be alleviated. Participants' experiences echoed the sentiments of the HOPES Conference (2019) that providing more scholarships would reduce the pressure of competition. They also highlighted the value of a stipend to reduce the pressure of high living costs in Jordan. For Mahdi this pressure was particularly significant, causing him to judge the overall influence of higher education on his well-being as negative.

Second, the findings highlight the importance of promoting autonomy among Syrian refugees. Access to higher education alone does not promote emotional well-being if not aligned with the student's interests. Efforts to increase access to higher education must therefore incorporate a concern for *choice.* Refugees need autonomy to choose a course that will promote their emotional well-being—the "luxury of choice" that Nabil lacked.

Third, students currently rely on families or friends for emotional support and called for greater psychosocial support within universities. Such support would alleviate the stresses and strains that students face, placing higher education on the spectrum of psychosocial support the IASC pyramid illustrates (2007: 12). It could also promote social well-being, taking advantage of the unique opportunity that universities provide as a space where young Jordanians and Syrian refugees come together. In this context, qualitative assessments of psychosocial support are valuable to establish the needs of individuals within the group, as expressed by Soye and Tauson (2018) and reflected in participants' varied experiences. For some, access to education is itself a key form of non-specialised support. For others, it must be combined with specialised support.

Finally, to sustain positive effects on well-being, paths to further study or employment must be supported. This justifies concern for labour market participation found in literature on higher education for refugees (Dryden-Peterson, 2010; Lenette, 2016; Bircan, 2018) and suggests a particular need to address the negative effects of legal uncertainty and limited work permits for Syrian refugees in Jordan (UNHCR, 2013; Lau et al., 2020). Nevertheless, access to higher education can promote well-being even in unfavourable conditions. Higher education therefore warrants attention, beyond functionalist goals, as a potential means of supporting the psychosocial needs of refugees.

8. Conclusion, and a way forward

The research presented in this thesis advances our understanding of how educational experiences influence well-being in displacement. The findings confirm that access to higher education should be a key element in the response to the Syria crisis. Beyond its role in improving employability, higher education supports the subjective well-being of refugees. It is a source of meaning and purpose; a place to develop positive relations with others. Participants' experiences reinforce the fact that refugee education has a purpose beyond UNHCR's three durable solutions of integration, third country resettlement, and repatriation (Dryden-Petersen, 2017): it also helps them to prepare for an unknowable future (Dryden-Petersen, 2017: 1). The overall positive effect on well-being, particularly eudaimonic well-being, also aligns with a key priority of the response to the Syria crisis: promoting resilience (UNDP and UNHCR, 2020: 9).

The influence of higher education on well-being is not, however, universally positive. All participants shared stressful aspects of their experience. That participants nonetheless valued the positive influence of their education is significant, but there is a need to address the challenges of accessing, funding, and integrating into higher education. Moreover, variations present in how participants perceived their higher education experiences highlight that experiences of displacement more generally must be considered from the individual's perspective. This principle, and the qualitative methodology employed in this thesis, can therefore be more widely applied to needs assessments for programmes regarding higher education for refugees.

The findings of this thesis raise potential avenues of future research. First, well-being in higher education appears to intersect with broader living conditions. More qualitative studies of refugee well-being, placing the domain of education alongside other domains of life and including Syrian refugees living in camps, are needed to explore this further. Including Jordanians living in vulnerable conditions would also help to examine how far the emphasis on eudaimonic well-being present in this study is unique to those experiencing displacement, and to better understand how to support the resilience of host communities alongside that of refugees. Second, the importance of the interpersonal side of university suggests that in-person learning is the most effective means of promoting well-being. This could be fruitfully explored by comparing the subjective well-being of Syrian students with refugee status undertaking in-person learning and those undertaking online or blended learning, which is increasingly a focus of efforts to improve access to higher education (HOPES, 2019). Finally, longitudinal studies would be valuable to establish how far the impact of higher education on well-being is sustained over time. Revisiting the perception of participants as they graduate and enter the labour market would help to determine whether the value attached to higher education declines if participants' expectations cannot be met.

Such research would help to place concern for refugee well-being more firmly within efforts to promote quality education for all, as expressed by Sustainable Development Goal 4, and recognise that refugee education has a purpose beyond functionalist goals. As Jordan, and the world, responds to the economic challenges likely to result from COVID-19, a commitment to education to support human rather than economic development will be more important than ever.

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Appendices

Appendix A Researcher-generated outline for participant drawings

Appendix B Semi-structured interview guide

Appendix C Information sheet and consent form for participants

Appendix A: Researcher-generated outline for participant drawings

Appendix B: Semi-structured interview guide

Information for the interview

- The researcher will take a moment to introduce herself. She will explain the nature and purpose of the research;
- The researcher will give the participant ample time to review the information letter and consent form and ensure all questions are answered before it is signed;
- The researcher will ask the interviewee for their preference with regard to attribution or anonymity, including use of audio recording;
- The interview will be semi-structured in format, with sequence and wording of questions changing in response to the particular participant. It will last for approximately one hour;
- The interview will start with background / demographic questions, before moving into questions related to experience, opinion, and feelings;
- The researcher will end the interview by thanking the participant and asking whether the participant is available for follow-up questions and/or reflection on interview synthesis.

Interview Questions

Part 1: Background / demographic questions
Conversational style to build rapport. Touch on:

- Age
- Gender
- Residence status in Jordan
- Area of study
- Start and end dates of higher education
- Could you tell me a little about your degree?
- When did you arrive in Jordan?

Part 2: Drawing
Participants are provided with an outline of a building and given 15 minutes to put together a drawing of their experience, with the following verbal instructions:

- Draw a picture or series of pictures that describes what your experience of higher education has been like for you – your experience of X university/college. You are not going to be evaluated on your artistic ability. 'Stick people,' for example, are fine.

Participants are then asked to provide an interpretation of their drawing.

1. What does it represent about your experience of higher education?
2. Why did you draw…? Can you tell me about…?

Part 3: Semi-structured dialogue

Theme 1: Opening questions on overall experience/satisfaction

Overall, how do you feel about your educational experience? Has it been positive or negative?
What have you been satisfied with? What have you been dissatisfied with?
What do you like about the university environment? What do you not like?
How do you feel your legal refugee status has affected your experience?

Theme 2: Affect / emotional well-being

How would you describe the emotions you felt when you first started HE?
Do you feel your emotions have changed over time?
What, if anything, do you enjoy about university?
What, if anything, do you not enjoy about university?
Call to mind the last time you studied for university. How did you feel?
How would you describe your relationships with other students?
How would you describe your relationships with your teachers?

Theme 3: Eudaimonic well-being

Overall, how valuable is your university experience to you?
Does your university experience contribute to your personal goals?
Do you feel you have gained important skills from your higher education?
When you have difficulties at university, where do you turn to for support?

Theme 4: Closing questions on overall experience/satisfaction

If you could change one thing about your university experience, what would that be? - What could improve your experience?
How important would you say higher education is to you?
Aside from what we've already discussed, are there any other aspects of your experience of higher education in Jordan that have been important to you?

Appendix C: Information sheet and consent form for participants

Information sheet [Arabic version also provided]
Research project on the well-being of higher education students with refugee status in Amman, Jordan

What is this project?
This project explores the experiences of Syrian students with refugee status attending higher education in Amman. The questions posed in the research explore students' views of what is important for well-being in an educational context. Questions will also consider the role that attending higher education plays in supporting or hindering well-being.

Why are you being contacted?
You have been contacted because you are a Syrian student with refugee status attending higher education in Amman. I am interested in hearing your views about your experience of higher education and your opinion regarding the relationship between higher education and your well-being.

How is the research being conducted?
Data will be collected through an interview with the researcher with an expected duration of one hour. During the interview, you will be asked to complete a drawing related to your educational experience. You have the freedom to choose what you draw and you are not going to be evaluated on your artistic ability. These data will be collated by the researcher, coded and stored securely. No personal identifying information will be stored with this data - your responses will be entirely anonymous.

Involvement in this research is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions with which you are uncomfortable. The research will involve questions relating to your well-being and how it is connected to your experience of higher education. You will be asked about your emotions and your evaluation of your experience, but you will not be asked about experiences prior to your attendance of higher education. You may stop your participation at any time during the process without explanation.

Data from this project will only be used for academic purposes by the researcher named below. No personal risks are anticipated from participation, and consideration to research ethics has been given in the design of this project.

Who is responsible for this research?
Researcher: Siobhán Coskeran, MSc student, Department of Human Geography, Lund University
Email address: [researcher email address]
Phone number: [researcher phone number]
If you have any concerns with the conduct of this research, please contact the Programme Coordinator for the master's programme in International Development and Management (LUMID) at Lund University [LUMID email address].

Consent form [Arabic version also provided]
Research project on the well-being of higher education students in Amman, Jordan

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. ☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my rights being affected. ☐
3. I understand there is no payment or compensation for participation. ☐
4. I understand that I can at any time ask for access to the information I provide and I can also request the destruction of that information if I wish. ☐
5. I agree to take part in the above study. ☐
6. I agree for the interview to be audio-recorded (recordings will be securely stored in digital format and deleted 12 months after the completion of the project). ☐
7. I give permission for the transcript of my interview/research to be used for research purposes only. ☐
8. I am aware that I will be asked to make a drawing. I grant permission for the researcher to keep my drawing and to use my drawing for research purposes (i.e., my drawing can reproduced in academic writings or included in presentations related to the research). ☐
9. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential. I understand that I have the right to anonymity. I assign copyright of my transcript to the researcher, who may quote the transcript with strict preservation of anonymity. ☐
10. I consent to be contacted by the researcher for follow-up questions and/or validation of the synthesis of the interview. I am aware that participation in follow-up tasks is voluntary and I can withdraw my consent at any time. ☐

Participant name (printed)	**Signature**	**Date**
Researcher name (printed)	**Signature**	**Date**