

Meaning of life for Young

African adults living in Ireland

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ABSTRACT

This study will establish what life means for young African adults between the ages of 18-21 living in Ireland. It will try to understand how they adjust to culture with different cultural norms and values as well as how they view and understand the Irish community and their place within it. Using a Qualitative method which involves interviewing 4 females and 4 males this study will focus on what life means to them in the context of living in Ireland. The transcribed data was analysed using thematic analysis. The research gives the participants an opportunity and voice to express their experiences, different challenges they face in their host community and methods utilized to adjust to these challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Growing up, I struggled, and had difficulty choosing between my own cultural values with which I was raised, and the need to assimilate into the north American culture where I lived. My family experienced much pain as we developed into a mixture of two worlds that are distinctly different, yet both beautiful.

(Second- generation immigrant cited in Dugsin, 2001, p.233).

Ethnically Ireland has diversified greatly over the past few years. According to the 2006 census statistics 419,733 foreign nationals live in Ireland, (Skokauskas & Clarke, 2009,p.227). 66% of them are European Union citizens, 11% are Asians, 5% are Americans, 9% are Africans, and 6% from the rest of Europe. (CSO, 2006). Before 1990 Ireland has not experienced multiculturalism, which is a term used to describe the changes that are taking place in Irish society as a result of immigration. Now it is an important fact in determining the growth in Ireland. Immigration in Ireland used to be mostly limited to former Irish emigrants known as returnees and British people who came to Ireland either to oppose the Irish culture before the 1920s or as retirees. There were also employees of foreign- owned companies from America, Japan or Germany who relocate to Ireland as a result of their employment. By 2002, 38% of all immigrants were returnees, 35% came to Ireland from outside the European Union and the United states. (Share, Tovey, Corcoran, 2007, pp.164-165).

In recent years, Ireland has become one of the countries in the world that has embraced migrants, asylum seekers and refugees from all walks of life. African community is one of the new communities which have emerged in Ireland in the Celtic Tiger era. Following arrival in a new country, African children have to face what is probably their biggest challenge and an obstacle to their integration, language barrier and general culture and social differences, they have to struggle, unlike the children of returning Irish emigrants who find it easier to integrate into the Irish society, because the language may unlikely be a barrier and Irish culture may be familiar to them through their parents. (Culleton, 2004). In addition to the developmental problems, young African adults must deal with many challenges in their new society.

In this regard, this thesis could help us understand how well young African adults, have integrated into the Irish society, their perception of the Irish community and how well they are doing in terms of adjusting to a culture different from theirs, with different food, sports (Gaelic games) and religious customs (First Holy Communion and Confirmation), which according to Culleton (2004) are important rites of passage for children in Ireland.

Cultural Maintenance

Herskovits (1936), asserts that acculturation is a result of the process when groups with different cultures come into continuous contact with each other, in that situation, changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups and for this to take place two distinct different cultural groups must exist and the groups must be in direct contact with one another over a significant period of time. (Obasi & Leong 2010, pp.526). Berry (1980), proposed four possible acculturation strategies based on the individual's attitude towards his/her original

culture and the new culture. He distinguishes integration, assimilation, marginalisation, and separation strategy. Integration is maintaining of one's own cultural identity while in contact with members of the other culture. This can lead to assimilation, when an individual's contacts with the other culture are made, the individual's original cultural bound disconnects. However, if both cultures are rejected it results in marginalisation where individuals (especially teenagers) rebel against both cultures which may lead to gang culture. Separation strategy is utilized when an individual expresses a positive attitude towards his/her own culture combined with a negative attitude towards the other culture which could results lack of assimilation of such an individual. (Skokauskas & Clarke, 2009, pp.230).

Acculturation alters certain cultural values, research found that the traditional values of Vietnamese adolescents living in Australia decreased with time. (Van de Vijver, 2009). However there are also values which tend to be less influenced by acculturation, which can be noticed in the case of Immigrants from India in the United States who have retained their values concerning family. The changes in values may be influenced by two factors. First, the assimilating group may want to maintain specific values whereas the majority group may put pressure on them to change specific values and practices. When the pressure from the majority group is large and the relevant value is not essential for the cultural identity of the assimilating group, they are more likely to change their cultural value in the direction of the majority. However, when the value is viewed as a main part of the culture and the pressure from the majority group is not very strong, the value of the assimilating group is less likely to change (pp.. 163).

According to Syed Ali (2007), Milner's theory of status relations (1994, 2004) presents a better understanding of acculturation because it emphasizes the effect which a particular

group have on the behaviour of other individuals. He suggests that there are two ways to gain status: through conformity to norms and through the regulation of intimate social associations. For example, with whom one eats, who one associates with. If an individual conforms to the norms and makes the right association, one may belong to a higher status group, however if one does not make the right associations one might likely lose status.

Applying Milner's theory to the context of immigration it can be noticed that, acculturation like other status processes is not a fixed, stable or static process but it is a social construct which may vary over an individual's life time. (Ali, 2007, pp.3).

Post-modernist theorists argue that in everyday life, people come across a range of cultures and must routinely deal with cultural difference as normal. This is as a result of living in a global society. (Share et al, 2007, p.361). The process of acculturation is a reality for African young adults living in Ireland because they represent a different ethnic group that is constantly in contact with other ethnic groups, such as Irish, Americans, British, German and many more. (Obasi & Leong 2010).

Cultural conflict

Share et al (2007, pp.363) refers to culture as not only a set of practices that takes place in the public world, but as the nature of everyday life within households, families and workplaces. Maroon (as cited in Varghese and Jenkins, 2009, pp.237) describes cultural values conflicts as an experience with negative effects like guilt and anxiety when the values and behavioural expectations that are internalised from one's culture and the values and behavioural expectations imposed on an individual from the other culture collide with each

other. This situation plays a very important role in individual's psychological and psychosocial functioning and could likely produce strain in acculturation process of an individual.

Recent studies from the United States, (Varghese & Jenkins, 2009, pp.238) has identified the primary concerns of immigrants parents are:-,(1) fears of losing their children to the US culture, (2) loss of parental authority over children and (3) loss of respect within their community due to children's violation of their cultural norms. This study also identified how young adult immigrants reveal experiences of family conflicts due to disagreements in areas such as parental control, poor communication expectation of success and excellence in the area of dating and marriage.

Share et al (2007, pp.361) outlines that different groups in society struggle and compete with each other to achieve and retain their culture using different strategies to achieve their aim.

Individuals are expected to bring honour to their families by respecting elders, obeying authority figures without question and conform to cultural values. Research studies shows that immigrants who were primarily socialised in their country experienced a less mixed sets of cultural values, whereas those who grew up within their families that were set in U.S. culture were exposed to a range of values outside their family, giving them more opportunities for cultural value conflict. (Varghese & Jenkins, 2009, pp.235-236).

Skokauskas & Clarke (2009), outlines that young adults who become adolescents in their new society often experience an inter-generational clash of values with parents and relatives because of the differences between what their parents want for them

and what they may want for themselves in the new country. Often peer-group pressures clash with cultural values imposed by their families, leading to parents resisting their children's acculturation. Inter-generational conflicts are often created when children become acculturated at a fast rate before their parents, quickly integrating and assuming western behaviours, attitude values and habits different from those expected of adults and children in their own native country. (pp.230).

Meaning of life

According to symbolic interactionism, people's behaviour depends on the meaning that incidents and events have for them. (Ardelt et al, 2008). Durkheim suggests that modern societies are different from pre-modern ones in the values placed on individuals and consequently, we can assume that post-modern societies differ from modern ones in this regard. In post-modern societies, an individual belief in self-realisation turns into a search for their personal identity. (Share et al, 2007). According to research studies carried out in Ireland In recent years, the use of Irish language by urban people in Ireland has increased, because this lifestyle choice offers them a sense of identity. (pp. 362).

King and Hicks (2009), claim that an individual feels a sense of meaning when an event that fits with pre-existing beliefs and expectations makes sense. Leontiev (2005) proposes that meaningfulness might arise from a sense of events which are particularly significant as well those which constitute one's normal aspect of life. (pp.317).

Research study carried out in Australia shows that the meaning of life partly intercede the

relationship between acculturative stress and life satisfaction. Individuals who experience marginalization go on to search for more personal meaning in their lives because lack of integration into a society could trigger negative outcomes of what life means for that individual. Therefore finding personal meaning in life is related to increase satisfaction with life when integration becomes successful. (Pan et al, 2008).

King and Hicks (2009), describe meaning in life as an experience which can have a positive effect when things are going well. Experiences such as getting a well paid job may be treated as meaningful because they fit with an individual's expectation for meaningful experiences. Meaning might also be perceived during negative life experiences. An individual with very religious beliefs might detect meaning in the death of a loved one within a meaning system that includes meeting again in heaven. The quality of an individual's meaning system may allow for the detection of meaning even during very difficult times. During accommodation processes one's experiences may lead to enlightenment after the person fully integrates the new experiences.

According to Steger et al (2009), the process of creating a sense of meaning in life begins in adolescence, and continues throughout one's life, that creating meaning is linked to an individual's development, and other processes such as the development of identity, relationships and goals. Research carried out in America has revealed that, at different ages Individual's experience different levels of the presences of meaning in their life to the extent which they make sense of importance in their lives, that younger age groups have higher levels of the search for meaning than older age groups. (p. 44).

Psychosocially, life for young adults means diversity. They make their own choice as they are constantly trying to figure out all possible options presented by their culture, genes, social group at the same time trying to meet basic needs. For young adults in a multicultural society trying to establish their ethnic identity becomes difficult because the existence of new norms and values of their now society in the mist of parental wish and peer pressure which makes it hard to adjust. Even though Erikson thought that most people achieve their identity by the end of adolescence, a study of adolescent immigrants has shown that for today's children identity crisis often continues into adulthood, and therefore changes with time and circumstances depending on situations. (Berger, 2008, pp. 499-501).

Meaning may be assumed to be an on going recognition or may be viewed as a construction that an individual makes for oneself from events that life presents. This study is an attempt to improve our understanding of how people from a different ethnic group and culture, namely African one, with different norms and values, view Irish society and how they construct the meaning of their experiences within it.

Aims

The aim of the current study is to establish what life means for young African adults aged 18-21 living in Ireland and how well they have integrated, assimilated or adapted in the Irish community. It will try to understand how they adjust to culture with different from their cultural norms and values as well as how they view and understand the Irish community and their place within it. Using a qualitative method which involves the

interviewing 4 females and 4 males this study will focus on what life means to them in the context of living in Ireland. This research will give the participants young African adults an opportunity and voice to express their experiences, different challenges they face in their host community and the methods utilized to adjust to these challenges.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research method was used in this study. This design was chosen because qualitative research provides an approach which describes the meaning individuals and groups give to their social and human world. (Creswell,2009, p.4).

The aim of the research method is to establish what life means for young African adults living in Ireland and in order to get an understanding of their views the chosen method should be able to produce a rich data of their perceptions. Semi-structured interviews (Appendix 1) with a pre-set questionnaire were utilized to make sure the interviews cover specific areas. All of the participants were encouraged to construct their own views. This allowed participants to express themselves and any opinion they may have towards any aspects of the Irish community and culture. Participants were interviewed individually.

Apparatus

The interviews were all recorded using mp3 digital voice recorder. The interviews were then transcribed. Nvivo 9 software package was used as part of the analysis process to organise research data collected, code them and put them into different themes for analysis.

Participants

The sample for the research study consisted of 8 African young adults living in Ireland, 4 females and 4 males. Participants were selected on the basis of their age, (18-21 years old). All participants were either in 3rd level education or intending to go to college.

Access to the participants was gained through informal contact. Confidentiality was important to the participants so each participant was informed about the interviews and why it was being carried out. They were assured that recordings of interviews will be properly disposed of after the study is completed.

Research Design

The research design employed was a data-led qualitative study. This research will be analysed using thematic analysis as it is the intention to establish not just what the participants say but how they feel about their new community. Fossey et al (2002, P.728) describes thematic analysis as a process of classifying, comparing and identifying themes within data. This method provides the researcher with the tool enabling her to establish what life means for young African adults living in Ireland.

Procedures

Participants were interviewed individually, before the interviews commenced participants were given a brief introduction on the research topic. During the interviews the researcher looked at issues which give meanings to participants lives. The following topics were covered:

Arrival

Education

Friendship

Views of the community

Family

Cultural background

Future plans

A pilot interview was conducted to test the questions and the flow of the interview. No issues requiring additional attention were found.

Ethical concerns

None of the participants expressed concern with the research topic. Each of the participants was given a confidentiality agreement signed by the researcher (Appendix 2) which states that participants are anonymous no copies of the recording of the interview would be used for any other purpose except for the research report and all the data will be kept with strict confidentiality.

RESULTS

This section presents the Analytic points that emerged from the data analysis. To differentiate between participant's responses, numbers were allocated to each participant.

Arrival

The arrival of participants showed that the decision to move to Ireland was based on their parent's desire of an opportunity for a better life in Ireland.

*"I came to Ireland because my dad was here first as a nurse
in one of the hospital P4".*

"...being here in Ireland was due to my parents, they wanted a good life I guess for us P3".

Some of the participants expressed mixed emotions. Coming to Ireland meant leaving their families and friends behind.

*"...eh Ireland is okay but I miss people in Nigeria
but I hope to see them soon P3".*

"Life is very good but I miss my Granma and cousins in Africa P5".

While many of the participant's shared similar attitudes towards living in Ireland.

*"I actually enjoy it am use to this system.
I love Ireland I really do P1".*

".....yah I do it's like a new experience for me P6".

.....yes I think it is good it is peaceful and okay P8".

On the other hand other participants seemed to have no idea what was ahead of them.

"....things I dislike I think it' the weather, it changes it's just something you can't predict and I have gotten used to it P1".

"...they speak differently compared to other country like Britain and America

it was hard to understand at first but now some people say I have

developed an Irish accent when am talking to them P6".

"...eh sometimes some people who act funny when

they see you as a black young man P8".

"... The accent too was a problem for me before because it was

hard to understand what they are saying because they talk too

fast but now it's fine so I have blended in so it's normal for me P5".

Education

Participant's experiences of school before arriving in Ireland varies many of the participants reported that they were used to punishment as a form of discipline at school in their countries of origins.

"....in Nigeria if you are late for school you are seriously punished P1".

"....in Africa I remember if you don't do your homework you get into bigger trouble P5".

Participants reports that their experience of education in Ireland is different from their own educational system in Africa.

"....in school they don't push you as bad as they push you back home. So over here you can go at a slow pace or at a fast pace the tutors will help you through P6".

"When I was in secondary school if you don't do your home work here you get a journal note"....in my education its grand there is no discrimination P5".

"Eh I don't think there's any problem like the tutors if you have any problems regarding your studies they help you out P3".

Some participants felt that standard set by their parents was a contributing factor to their commitment in school here in Ireland.

"In the area of your education, your parent usually expects you to do excellent because you are in Ireland they think your education is suppose to be better here than it is back home P6".

*"...you are under too much pressure from your parent to do well in school.
every parents expects their child to do good P3".*

One of the participants went on to express negative emotions on the impact this might have.

"Sometimes it's difficult to keep up with the high standard they set for you P6".

Friendship

Participants report very strong positive feelings of the friendliness among Irish people.

*"yah they are... most people in my class are really friendly they don't
discriminate people P3".*

*"I would say most of them are friendly at least I have friends in different
places I will say most of them are friendly P8".*

"(Laughter) I guess so yes! P7".

Most participants agree that they do have good relationship with their peers.

*"...yes I have a good relationship with them my best friend when
I came here was Irish in first class P1".*

*"...I have a good relationship with them because am the only black in
my class and they still hang around with me P3".*

"...and yes I do have a good relationship with my friends and other people here in Ireland P7".

However, some of the participants did not agree to having a good relationship with their peers.

"...sometimes our friends in Africa are alright but here they don't come to your houses they won't do anything with you. In Africa we use to go to their houses, stay there for ages but here they wouldn't even come to your house so you won't think of going to their houses as well that is the fact anyway P4".

"I guess in some areas I guess they are not use to seeing people from different countries they are kind of mean and just snap back at you P1".

One particular participant felt indifferently about others views on having good relationships with their peers.

"...it depends on the area you go to and people you meet P6".

Participants believes that because most Irish young adults drink alcohol and smoke it has created barrier to develop friendship with Irish peers.

"...for starter's people drink a lot almost every weekend and that's not good P5".

"It's very; it's hard sometimes because when you go out with them they expect you to drink and when you do tell them you don't drink and smoke they feel you are

missing out each time you kind of explain to them because they don't understand P2".

Culture could also act as a barrier to friendship for some participants.

"...some of my friends cannot adjust to my culture they don't understand why if I see an African elderly person I have to bend down to greet them P3".

"...regarding my Irish mate I make them understand that we are brought up differently so the way you are brought up that's the way you tend to stay when you grow up take it or leave it P6".

Friendships with people from other nationalities were perceived as being the same for some of the participants.

"Oh we get on well because we are in the same boat (Laughter) P5".

"I think I have no problem mixing up with people from other nationalities P8".

Participant 5 went on to give a full account of what she means by being in the same boat with people from other nationalities.

"...we are strangers in the Irish society so it only makes sense for us to get along really well because we do not for example share the Irish sense of humour on different things P5".

While some of the participants did not agree with the idea of being the same with other nationalities.

"They tend to keep to themselves most of them, they do things there own way they speak their languages when they are around other people. So it's hard sometimes to communicate with them P6".

"... They do you know keep to themselves but then one has no chance to get on when you do not speak their languages P2".

Views of the community

Most participants found life in Ireland quiet easy and took appositive view of it as a place to live.

"I think I find it easier because I grew up here.... Its good place to live and one can achieve anything in life if you want to P1".

"Life is easy its okay and peaceful is good for me considering where am coming from P2".

"Easy because I kind of grew up here yah it's cool anyway P4".

Other participants however had mixed feelings about living in Ireland.

"Most times it's interesting sometimes it's boring because you miss home sometimes its hard communicating its not the same back home everybody mixes up you have your family around you and things like that P6".

"Is a change to my own original culture before I came to living in Ireland P8".

Lack of respect for elders was a source of concern for many of the participants.

"...eh the training well kids are brought up more in Africa I think because here they disrespect their parents and they get away with little things P5".

"...I can not stand people that disrespect their elders which is very possible here young people don't help their elders and talk back at them P3".

"they disrespect their parents and get away with it in Africa my God you will suffer for that! P4".

Another aspect of concern for the participants was the difference between their culture and the Irish culture.

"in African culture kids are more disciplined than the Irish culture. In Africa if we talk back at our parents we get other treatment as suppose Irish kid if they talk back they are grounded and doing house work we have to do house work they don't P1".

"...greetings you know is very different when you are back home to greet your elders you bow your head or lay down but right here you have to shake someone to greet P2".

"yes a lot of differences between us apart from the colour of the skin the culture is different in many ways from food, the weather and the kind of belief in some cases.... eh like in my culture there is belief that no matter how old you are, you don't look at your elders eye ball to eyeball when they are talking to you, you respect people in authority no matter what and we look after our elderly people but here the government has to do that for you P8".

"The Irish culture is basically based on drinking at a very young age while the African one is really different we have the fear of god in Sudan and fear to do some things. The Irish are very outspoken people they don't hold back anything P6".

One participant went on give an account of her opinion on cultural differences which was very confusing for her.

"Hmmm eh I have two cultures one is my dads who is an African and the other is my Mum who is Irish. It's a bit confusing sometimes but in my dads culture they can of just do things like over the board or something like that P7".

The participant went on to describe the impact of two different cultures in their household.

"Culturally its war in my house (Laughter) my dad believes in weird values and my mum is gentle a typical Irish woman P7".

For some participants holding on to their cultural norms and values has become a huge part of their lives, for them it is a form of directions in their lives and has helped shape the way they do things in their day to day dealings with other people.

"I think every where you go people from different background have different culture and it is designed like that so my feelings is just that it is something that has to be done people have to have different cultures but the important thing is how to manage or live with it P8".

"For me I think our culture is the best because the way they are doing their own I don't understand but I just get on with them because am in their country P4".

However, some participants had expressed positive emotions about cultural differences and can't be bored if it exists or not.

"...eh it doesn't really get in my way that much P7".

"It's alright I grew to it I learnt it. For example Nigeria independence day we wear green then St Patricks day we all go to see the parade P1".

Family

Most of the participants were concern that the expectations of their parents can create additional tensions and misunderstandings.

"...because I was brought to abroad there is more expected from me. My parents and people back home expects me to be the next big thing...like they expects you to be the next doctor or bill gates P1".

"...your parents usually expects you to do excellent because you are in

Ireland... sometimes it really annoys me P6”.

On the other hand some participants believes that regardless of what is expected of them, they still manage to follow their heart desires.

“...expectations of my parents is very high but I choose myself that I want to be whatever I want... because at the end it is my life so they just have to understand because they love me and want the best for me P5”.

“...my parents have to understand that I grew up and don't want to do what they want P1”.

“like the first time we came here we were not use to things like moving around because our parents would not let us but like the more we stay the more we mix up P3”.

Some participants also felt that their parents were too strict and overprotective.

“...at 20 my parent still thinks that am still too young to make my own decisions P4”.

“...whenever I stay out with friends my parents still thinks that it is not decent, am 21 years old and in the university P3”.

However female participants complain of parental control more than male participants.

"...my brothers are allowed to go out and hang around their friends like go to parties but I cannot just hop and go it is just like college then home 1 minutes late I get mums phone call asking me where I am P5".

Participants born in Ireland had an easier time in relation to parental control.

"...am not a bay anymore and my parents knows that as far as am safe they don't interfere in my affairs P7".

Participants who came to Ireland in their late teens experienced more parental control than participants who grew up here in Ireland.

"My parent is hard to understand, they want to choose for you who you hang out with, go out with because they think they know what is best my friends in college from the same country they are now Irish I guess do not have the same problem as me P8".

The same participant went on to give a detailed account of his experience on parental control issue.

"...they could not understand eh me when I told them about my sexuality it was very difficulty for them to understand because of the cultural background they come from it hard for them to understand that am gay P8".

For some participants parental control is a challenge they are able to overcome so as to

adjust and mix up in their new community.

"...I just one day sat my parents down and had a long talk with them about the ways they do their things some times.... (Laughter) P5"

"I just try to do my best and things I can' I make my parents understand that this is too much for me. I would only be keeping myself unhappy by trying to be something am not P6"

"well because of the society we live in people here understand and can accept you that is the major way I was able to overcome it P8"

Cultural background

Some participants attached importance to their cultural background when asked if they think it is important to hold on to their cultural values.

"...because our culture is different so like it kind of clashes. But it's very important to hold on to your culture P5"

"...in this part of the world it is very easy to make mistakes I think so your values given to you back home still helps you maintain who you are P4"

"...it is your identity it is who you are and it's very important you pass this on to your children P6"

Participants placed a lot of values on maintaining their cultural norms and values. They appear to believe that they can retain their culture while being open to others.

"...the way we dress is different from the way the Irish dresses, like as a girl you are expected to cover yourself properly and with the opposite sex you are suppose to behave yourself in public P3".

"As you grow up here you learn and see more of other people's culture and ways of doing things but still you do not forget your own culture P4".

"...like was in the luas on my way to college two young people was there right in front of me I would say they are like the same age as me yes, they just wouldn't stop kissing each other I think that is disrespectful to other people because things that are private should remain that way and just thought wish my mum was here to see this (Laughter!) P3".

Future plans

The participants were very optimistic about their future. Having definite plans about what they wanted to do.

"To become success in what I do also to help others to grow and have self- esteem P8".

"Hope to be working in a medical setting, maybe as a nurse, midwife or social worker P3".

"I would like to work with children maybe one day become a social worker and write my own stories P7".

Some of the participants expressed their desire to return back to their own country.

"Hope to be an engineer someday and hopefully go back home and do something P6".

"Am planning to become an accountant, I love to work in my country P4".

While other participants expresses their desire to give back to their country of origin and Ireland.

"To qualify as a medical doctor by God's grace.... I want to give back to this country and Ireland P5".

While some participants have no desire to return to their country because they are use to life in Ireland.

"...Really looking forward to studying law and practicing in Ireland P1".

"To get a degree and maybe end up someday as a humanitarian here in Ireland P3".

DISCUSSION

The aim of this study is to establish what life means for young African adults living in Ireland. This study aim to gain an understanding on how young African adults adjust to culture different from their culture with different cultural norms and values. their views and understanding of the Irish community and their place within it. This study found that for participants, living in Ireland was based on their families' desire to escape from a difficult situation. They looked forward to living in Ireland with mixed feelings, as a way of having a better life and a longing to see friends and family in their country of origin. They seemed to have few ideas about what Ireland will be like. Many of the participants agreed that they enjoy living in Ireland and it has become a new experience for them. These findings correlates with previous research done in Northern Ireland in 2009, which showed that as children and young adults migrates into a new country they still sustain connections with their own country its traditions and their family members who still reside there in mist of trying to adapt in their new society. (Trew, 2009).

Most of the participants who were either in third or second level education reports that, initially when they first arrived to Ireland, the Irish accent was a challenge to them. They compared other countries such as Britain and America with Ireland in terms of clarity in the way they speak. However participants agreed that the longer they lived in Ireland communication became easier for them. Expectation of their parents can create additional tensions and misunderstanding in maintaining their cultural norms and values given to them in their country of origin. Research has indicated that a foreign child with an accent may feel marginalised in their host community and could lead to them not integrating. Some may spend their time acquiring fluency in trying to fit in which could lead to them adapting quicker in their host community before their parents. (Skokauskas and Clark, 2009, pp.231). Participants all agreed that the Irish weather is unpredictable and they have all gotten use to it.

This study found that female participants were more inclined to parental control than male participants and participants who arrived to Ireland in their teens than participants who grew up in Ireland. These findings correlate with previous research carried out in the United States which shows that migrant women are expected to hold on to strict gender roles and give attention to a well defined range of family responsibilities within their traditional culture (Varghese & Jenkins, 2009, pp.235).

This study found that before coming to Ireland participants have experienced an educational system which is very different to the Irish educational system. Punishment was allowed as a form of discipline in their countries of origins and standard set by their parents were the reasons they were all committed in their education because their education is supposed to be better here in Ireland than it is in their countries. Recent studies found that the role parents play in their child's educational development has many positive outcomes including academic and social success. Parental involvement in education also benefits parents themselves and could lead to positive relationships development in their community. (Brandon, 2007, pp. 116).

Participants thought that Irish people were friendly it was easy to communicate with them in English language. Relating to developing friendships, many of the participants found it easy to make friends with their Irish peers while some participants found it difficult to maintain good relationships. Maintaining relationships with immigrants from other cultures proved to be difficult because one has no chance to if you were not speaking the same language. Different attitudes to alcohol and smoking were also found to be a barrier in developing relationships. Participants believe that parents and families were not respected enough by young people in Irish community. All participants agreed that culture could also act as barrier for them developing friendship.

Maintaining their cultural norms and values were also a huge concern to the participants. They attached great importance to their cultural backgrounds and felt it was important to hold on to their cultural norms and practices in their new community. Some participants acknowledge the fact that even though the culture from their country of origin is different from the Irish culture, it is extremely important for them to hold on to their own cultural norms and practices. Their beliefs were that it was easy for one to make mistakes. For females participants getting pregnant at an early age was most likely to happen. Their cultural background helps them to maintain who they are. These findings correlate with previous research carried out in Netherlands which shows that as a result of immigration, only with family support did the values of young immigrants remained strong and did not change significantly with generation. (Van de Vijer & Arends-Toth, 2009, pp.163).

This study found that participants placed lots of values on retaining their cultural background while in contact with other culture through speaking their languages, cooking, communicating through face book, music and through an active cultural life within Irish community. Participants also reports that they were able to overcome parental control by making their parents understand their true feelings if things became to difficult for them and because of the society they now live in where one is accepted the way they are.

Participants had very specific plans about what they wanted to do in future, few planning to go on to third level education while most plan to give back to the community which gave them opportunities by building up their careers here in Ireland after graduation because they have become use to life in Ireland. While some plans to go back to their country of origins or maybe work in Europe and America.

Conclusion

This study found that many factors contribute to the meaning of life for the participants such as maintaining their original cultures, friendship with their Irish peers, less discrimination in their education and achieving their future plans. Research has shown that sources of meaning of life were, participating in personal relationships, leisure activities, personal growth and meeting basic and certain cultural factors also relate to meaning of life. (Pan et al, 2008, pp.222). Most of the participants seemed to have adapted a strategy as they live in the Irish community at the same time still attached to their cultural backgrounds through different means such as mentioned earlier. Life in Ireland will change the participant and they will help to change the community to which they now live in and this change may depend on how long they spend in Ireland. However, how the participant sees life here will be changed by their own previous experiences and expectations regardless of the challenges and barriers they may encounter, they have also found new opportunities now in life here in Ireland.

Limitations

The results for this research cannot be generalised to the whole population of young African adults living in Ireland because of the small sample size for the study. As the findings in this study were supported by previous research, this suggests that future research with a larger sample size may find consistent results.

Future research

The findings of this study create a picture of African young adults as ambitious and active. Future research will be to determine how their views change as they graduate from college and enter into the world of adulthood.

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APPENDIX 1

Interview Questions for young African adult living in Ireland

1. Hello, how are you?
2. Can you introduce yourself?
3. Were you born in Ireland? If not, at what age did you come to live in Ireland?
4. How did you come to live in Ireland?
5. Do you enjoy living in Ireland? Is there anything you dislike?
6. Are the people here friendly? Do you find you having a good relationship with them?
7. How do you feel you get on with people from other nationalities?
8. Have you noticed any differences between your culture and the Irish one?
9. If yes, how do you feel about the cultural differences?
10. What is life like to you living in Ireland?
11. What challenges do you face? (Cultural, in the area of education, expectations of their parents, relations with peers, accent).
12. How do you overcome these challenges?
13. What are your dreams and aspirations for the future?

APPENDIX 2

Consent Form

To whom it may concern

This study is to be used for educational purposes. All participants are anonymous, no copies of the recorded interviews would be used for any other purposes except for the research report and all of the data will be kept with strict confidentiality.

Signed _____

Date ____/____/____

