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Positive Youth Development and Thriving in Norwegian Youth

Sofia Nag Delgado,[1] Nilei Kattarina Huang,[2] Nora Wiium[3]
[1] Department of Addictive Medicine, Health Bergen, Norway
[2] Solli District Psychiatric Center, Bergen, Norway
[3] Faculty of Psychology, University of Bergen, Norway

Abstract

Positive youth development (PYD) focuses on positive qualities of youth and how such qualities can promote thriving as well as healthy development. PYD research on the association between developmental assets and thriving shows that young people who report numerous developmental assets also report many thriving indicators. However, to date little research has been performed in this field in Norway. Our study thus extends PYD research by investigating the associations between developmental assets and thriving among 591 Norwegian high-school students (55% girls). The participants' average age was 16.70 years (*SD* = .90). Findings from correlation analysis indicated that all eight developmental assets being examined correlated significantly with thriving, which was assessed as a composite variable reflecting good physical health, leadership, delayed gratification, overcoming of adversity, valuing of diversity, school success, and helping others. Still, regression analysis showed that only two of four internal assets (i.e., *commitment to learning* and *positive values*) and two of four external assets (i.e., *empowerment* and *constructive use of time*) remained significantly associated with thriving. The regression analysis also showed that developmental assets, along with the demographic variables: age, gender, and parents' educational level, accounted for 21% of the variance in thriving, while developmental assets alone accounted for some 19% of the variance. The findings suggest that developmental assets can provide a good

framework for promoting thriving and healthy development among young people in Norway. Yet, in this respect, more research is needed to better understand developmental assets and their influence in the Norwegian context.

Keywords: positive youth development, developmental assets, thriving, Norway

Pozitivni razvoj mladih in uspešnost mladih na Norveškem
Povzetek

Pozitivni razvoj mladih (PYD) se osredinja na pozitivne značilnosti mladih in na to, kako te značilnosti spodbujajo uspešnost mladih in zdrav razvoj. Raziskave po svetu poročajo o pomembni povezanosti med razvojnimi viri in uspešnostjo mladih. In sicer, mladi, ki poročajo o več razvojnih virih, poročajo tudi o več kazalnikih uspešnosti. Je pa tovrstnih raziskav na Norveškem manj. Pričujoča raziskava zapolnjuje to vrzel z raziskovanjem povezanosti razvojnih virov in kazalnikov uspešnosti na vzorcu 591 dijakinj in dijakov (55% deklet) iz Norveške. Povprečna starost dijakinj in dijakov je 16,70 let (SD = 0,90). Ugotovitve korelacijske analize so pokazale, da je vseh osem v raziskavo vključenih razvojnih virov statistično pomembno povezanih s kazalniki uspešnosti. Kazalniki uspešnosti so opredeljeni kot sestavljena spremenljivka, ki odraža dobro telesno zdravje, vodenje, odložitev nagrade, premagovanje stisk, sprejemanje raznolikosti, učni uspeh in pomoč drugim. V nadaljevanju je regresijska analiza pokazala, da sta le dva od štirih notranjih virov (tj. Zavezanost učenju in Pozitivne vrednote) in dve od štirih zunanjih virov (tj. Opolnomočenje in Konstruktivna raba časa) ostala statistično pomembno povezana z uspešnostjo. Regresijska analiza je pokazala tudi, da razvojni viri skupaj z demografskimi spremenljivkami: starostjo, spolom in stopnjo izobrazbe staršev pojasnijo 21% variabilnosti v uspešnosti, medtem ko razvojni viri sami pojasnijo približno 19% variabilnosti. Ugotovitve kažejo, da lahko razvojni vir predstavljajo dober okvir za spodbujanje uspešnega in zdravega razvoja mladih na Norveškem. Je za bolj poglobljeno razumevanje tako razvojnih virov kot njihovega vpliva v norveškem kontekstu potrebno več raziskav.

Ključne besede: pozitiven razvoj mladih, razvojni viri, uspešnost, Norveška

Adolescence is a transitional phase from childhood to adulthood characterised by biological, social, and cognitive changes/challenges. This is an important period in life in which individuals develop their identity, values

and interests while also searching for their place in society. Since adolescence is a period entailing many developmental changes, adolescents experience increased sensitivity to stressors (Steinberg, 2004). This makes adolescence a particularly vulnerable period when young people depend on receiving guidance and support from good role models in their immediate context to develop healthy. Research has long focused on what is wrong or missing in adolescents' development, emphasising risk factors and how to prevent them (Bowers et al., 2010; Scales et al., 2000). This deficit focus also appears to have coloured society's views and expectations of adolescents. However, studies that consider the positive aspects of youth development are gaining ground around the world. Early research has shown a link between developmental assets and thriving indicators in youth. We investigate this link among Norwegian youth in the present study.

Positive Youth Development and Developmental Assets

One of the theoretical frameworks that has concentrated on young people's positive perspective is Positive Youth Development (PYD), a developmental framework, which proposes that positive development is a function of an active interaction between the youth and their contexts like home and school (Lerner et al., 2011; Silbereisen & Lerner, 2007). This framework states that positive development among young people can be supported by developmental assets in five contexts – the individual, social, family, school, and community (Benson et al., 2007). Thus, developmental assets are the building blocks that young people need to grow into healthy, caring, and responsible adults. In addition, the experience of the assets is supposed to protect young people from engaging in risk behaviours (Benson, 2007).

There are 40 developmental assets in total, comprising 20 internal and 20 external assets (Benson, 2007). Internal assets, which reflect personal skills, values and competencies, comprise four categories: *commitment to learning* (i.e., understanding the importance of learning and believing in one's abilities); *positive values* (i.e., developing values that can facilitate good life choices); *social competencies* (i.e., the ability to effectively interact with others, make choices and master new situations); and *positive identity* (i.e., believing in self-value and feeling of having control over life). Similarly, external developmental assets, which are the positive experiences and qualities that parents, the school, friends, and the local community contribute to young people are divided into four categories: *support* (i.e., caring, appreciation and acceptance from people in youth contexts); *empowerment* (i.e.,

an environment that provides youth with a feeling of being valuable, safe and respected); *boundaries & expectations* (i.e., clear rules and consequences for behaviour, good role models, as well as encouragement and expectations of responsible behaviour); and *constructive use of time* (i.e., the opportunity to interact with peers and adults in leisure activities and to learn new skills). The assumption is that developmental assets increase the likelihood of positive development and thriving among youth, although they can also lower the likelihood of engaging in risk behaviours like substance abuse, crime, and violence (Benson, 2007).

Within PYD, thriving is typically defined as an indicator of healthy development in the absence of problematic behaviour and other signs of pathology (Scales et al., 2000). Benson (2007) proposed eight indicators of thriving: *school success*, *leadership*, *valuing diversity*, *physical health*, *helping others*, *delayed gratification*, *overcoming adversity*, and *resisting danger*. Specifically, these indicators reflect how much time youth spend at school and youth organisations or activities, the desire to get to know people from different ethnic backgrounds, motivation to do well at school, skills in planning and decision-making, experience of personal control, and self-esteem. While developmental assets may be defined as the foundation the individual needs to thrive, thriving indicators are signs that the individual is thriving (Benson & Scales, 2009). This shows whether young people have enough resources that can contribute to thriving within a certain context.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model describes how the different contexts in which an individual is immersed affect their development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Consistent with the model, an individual dynamically interacts with several contexts in their micro-, meso-, exo- and macrosystems. The current study mainly focuses on the micro- and mesosystem (containing peers, family, and school), which are the contexts the individual has direct contact with, and the interaction of these contexts. The exo- and macrosystems refer to the larger community and national contexts along with the programmes and policies that ensure the resources required for positive development. In line with the ecological model, the assets are mostly visible in the micro- and mesosystems, making it easier to assess and advance the development of young people's positive qualities.

Developmental Assets and Thriving

The significant role played by developmental assets in thriving or positive development was shown in earlier studies. In a study of first-year university

students in Ghana, Wiium (2017) considered the experience of developmental assets among students together with how the assets influenced thriving. While more than half the students had experienced all four internal assets, a similar share had not experienced several of the assets in *support* and *constructive use of time* (external assets). At least 56% reported possessing five indicators of thriving, with only 1.4% reporting they had all seven of Benson's (2007) thriving indicators that were being assessed. Regarding the associations between developmental assets and thriving among the university students in Ghana, correlation analysis revealed several positive associations between the two sets of variables, while only three of the internal asset categories (*commitment to learning*, *positive values* and *positive identity*) maintained their significance (although it was marginal for the first two asset categories) in multivariate analysis. The internal assets explained 21% of the variance in a composite variable reflecting the number of thriving indicators reported, while the external developmental assets did not have much effect and only explained 1%.

Similar findings emerged in a US study (Scales et al., 2000) where it was observed that the more developmental assets a young person had access to, the higher the probability that they would also report indicators of thriving. This was particularly evident for the thriving indicators of school success, overcoming adversity, physical health, and delayed gratification. Developmental assets contributed 10% to 43% of the variance in the thriving indicators. Other studies confirming the cumulative effect of the developmental assets on thriving or positive development include a study by Adams et al. (2018) in which developmental assets, internal assets in particular, assessed as one composite factor, were found to facilitate academic performance in youth living in Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa. Moreover, a recent study of Portuguese students found several developmental assets, including self-esteem, family support, planning and decision-making, sense of purpose, positive family communication, positive values of caring, youth valued as resources, school engagement, and relationship with other adults as important predictors of life satisfaction (Soares et al., 2019). These earlier studies indicate the significant role of developmental assets on positive youth development, a role the current study seeks to explore among Norwegian youth.

The Norwegian Context

With its individualistic culture, Norway emphasises values like personal growth, caring for others and the environment, and equality (Hofstede, 2011). This holds political implications in which after-school activities and economic support for families of children and youth are prioritised in Norway. School is also mandatory in Norway and free for all children aged 6–16 years. Young people aged 16–19 years have the right to study at high school for 3 years, and if a student does not have or cannot satisfactorily benefit from the ordinary education at school, they are entitled to special education regardless of the reason for the need (New in Norway, 2019).

The focus on the rights and welfare of young people is central in Norwegian politics, with this having led to a strong youth policy in Norway. This is seen in the child and youth protection act that recognises young people as society's children and the nation's future (St.meld. nr. 40 [2001-2002], 2002). Moreover, the national youth policy from 2002 seeks to support Norwegian youth through six priority areas: comprehensive prevention work, education, activities in spare time and in the community, support for children and youth with severe behavioural problems, follow-up of young criminals, and knowledge and research (Youth Policy: Norway, 2014). Youth work in Norway is decentralised to level of municipalities which are largely independent in their practical implementation of child and youth policy (Bergan, 2017). In addition, as an ally of EU, Norway has participated in the EU Youth Programme since 1994 and implemented the Action Programme, which builds on the EU Youth Programme for Non-Formal Learning (Bergan, 2017). The national focus and prioritisation on youth policy is able to lead to an increase in the availability of resources/opportunities in Norwegian youth contexts.

The Present Study

Previous research on developmental assets has mainly taken place in the USA, yet the research field is growing internationally. This enables research on PYD and developmental assets to take cultural differences into account. Consistent with Benson (2007), the asset-building community and asset-building society in youth contexts will determine the availability of developmental assets and thus the number of thriving indicators that young people report. An asset-building community and asset-building society indicate norms and behaviours as well as the programmes and policies that nurture developmental assets in various youth contexts (Benson, 2007).

Research on PYD in Norway is limited. The current study therefore provides an opportunity for the PYD perspective to be studied in a new context. The aim of our study is to examine the association between developmental assets and thriving indicators among Norwegian youth attending high school. In line with earlier studies, we hypothesise that the more developmental assets Norwegian youth experience, the more thriving indicators they will also report. Demographic factors like gender, age and parents' educational background have been found to influence youth thriving outcomes where parents' educational background can have a positive influence, while females as well as younger youth tend to report possessing more developmental assets (Davis-Kean, 2005; Drescher et al., 2012; Erola et al., 2016). Accordingly, these demographics were also considered in this study. It is expected that the presence of developmental assets, and a positive association with thriving, will inform programmes and policies about those assets that must be further nurtured and those that need to be maintained at healthy levels.

Method

Participants

The data used in the present study were collected from 591 Norwegian youth attending a public high school in Vestland County Council. While the school was selected through convenience sampling, students on all levels (levels 1–3) were eligible to participate in the study. The participants' age varied from 15–19 years, with an average of 16.70 years (SD = .90). Among the 586 young people who provided information on their gender, 326 were girls (55%). More than half the participants reported that the highest education of their parents was college or university, with 56.3% having a father with a higher education and 67.3% a mother with a similar educational level.

Materials

Developmental assets. The "Developmental Assets Profile" (DAP; Search Institute, 2016) was used to measure the number of assets experienced in various youth contexts. Participants indicated the extent to which they had experienced Benson's 40 developmental assets, which reflected four categories of internal assets and four categories of external assets. Sample items of the four categories of internal assets (*commitment to learning, positive*

values, social competencies, and *positive identity*) were related to how participants like to learn, take responsibility for what they do, develop friendship with others, and feel that they have control over their life and future, respectively. For the four categories of external assets (*support*, *empowerment*, *boundaries & expectations*, and *constructive use of time*), sample items were related to participants having a family that shows them love and support, being included in the family's chores and decisions, attending a school that enforces rules fairly and spending time every week in sports, hobby clubs or an organisation at the school or in the community, respectively. The 40 developmental assets were measured with 51 items since some assets that addressed different contexts were assessed separately for these contexts (e.g., support at home and support at school). Response categories for the developmental assets ranged on a Likert scale from (1) *Never or Rarely* to (4) *Almost always or Very often*. Cronbach's alpha, assessing the internal consistency of the asset categories, ranged from .73 to .86, except for one external asset category, *constructive use of time,* that had a Cronbach's alpha of .44. The Cronbach's alphas of the current study are similar to those reported in previous studies (e.g., Scales et al., 2000).

Thriving indicators (Search Institute, 2016). Eight indicators of thriving were measured – *good physical health*, *leadership*, *delayed gratification*, *overcoming adversity*, *valuing diversity*, *school success*, *helping others*, and *resisting danger*. In the literature, the focus has been on seven of the eight indicators, where the indicator *resisting danger* was omitted because it overlaps with the 'resistance skills' item in *social competencies*, one of the internal asset categories (Scales et al., 2000). Thus, in our study we only looked at seven thriving indicators. For *good physical health*, *leadership*, *delayed gratification*, and *overcoming adversity*, participants responded either 'yes' or 'no' to questions probing whether they had been a leader over the last 12 months, their interest in a healthy diet and exercise, their ability to save money, and their ability not to give up in difficult situations. *Valuing diversity* indicated that participants thought it was fairly important or very important for them to get to know other people with a different cultural/ethnic background; *School success* implied that participants had mostly obtained a 6 (the highest grade) at school; *Helping others* indicated that participants spent at least 1 hour helping friends or neighbours during a typical week. Cronbach's alpha of the seven indicators was only .35. However, because we were interested in how the developmental assets were associated with the number of thriving indicators reported (as investigated in

earlier studies, for example, Scales et al., 2000) we examined the indicators as a composite variable reflecting the number of thriving indicators reported by the participants. The low Cronbach's alpha is addressed as a limitation in the discussion section.

Demographics. As demographic variables, the participants were asked to provide information about their age, gender (male or female), and parents' educational level (i.e. no education, primary school, high school, technical or vocational school, and university).

Procedure

The data were collected in 2015. Informed consent was sought from and given by both the school and the participants, where they were informed of the study's purpose and procedures. The data collection was conducted during school hours and lasted around 40 minutes. The response rate was 70%. Participants had access to the questionnaire through the internal online system at the school. The questionnaire was translated from English to Norwegian by Semantix Translations Norway AS, a company specialising in interpretation and translation services. The study was approved by the Regional Committees for Medical and Health Research Ethics (REK) in Norway.

Data Analyses

The data analyses were performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 25). We performed a cross-tabulation analysis to look at the frequency distribution of thriving according to the demographic variables. Correlation analysis was carried out to examine the zero-order correlations between the demographics, developmental assets and thriving. Finally, a regression analysis was conducted to assess the influence of the developmental asset categories on thriving, while controlling for the demographic variables.

Eight composite variables that reflected the number of reported developmental assets for the four internal and the four external asset categories were created and used in the analysis. Response alternatives on a 4-point Likert scale for the assets were recoded to create these composite variables. The response alternatives (1) *Never or rarely* and (2) *Occasionally or Sometimes* were recoded as developmental assets absent (1), while (3) *Often* and (4) *Almost always or Very often* were recoded as developmental assets present (2). This recoding was undertaken to assess the extent to which

participants reported the assets. This means the composite variables reflect the number of assets reported in each asset category. Further, in descriptive analysis, parents' educational level was recoded to (1) *high school or less*, and (2) *More than high school*. Gender was assigned the values 1 (boy) or 2 (girl). Preliminary analyses were carried out to verify the linearity and normal distribution of the data. The majority of participants (97%) had missing data in only 3 cases or less. Missing data was handled through pairwise deletion, namely, a procedure that excludes participants from the analyses when data are missing and includes them when data are available.

Results

Thriving by Demographic Variables: Cross-Tabulation Analysis

In Table 1, a cross-tabulation analysis of the number of thriving indicators (7 in total) reported relative to the demographic variables is presented. The findings on gender showed that girls were more likely to report 4 or 5 thriving indicators compared to boys, while boys were more likely to report 6 indicators of thriving compared to girls (Table 1). In terms of age, about 42% who did not report any thriving indictor were aged 17 while most of the participants who reported 6 of the thriving indicators were aged 16. For the father's and mother's education, participants whose parents had more than a high school education were more likely to report the thriving indicators than those whose parents had less than a high school education. However, the chi-square value did not indicate any significant difference in terms of gender, age, or parents' education.

Correlation Analysis of Demographic Variables, Developmental Assets, and Thriving

Weak correlations ranging from .00 to .21 were observed between the demographic variables and the developmental assets as well as thriving. In addition, positive correlations between thriving and all eight asset categories were observed. The weak-to-moderate correlations of thriving were with *commitment to learning* ($r = .34$, $p < .01$), *positive values* ($r = .36$, $p < .01$), *social competencies* ($r = .32$, $p < .01$), *positive identity* ($r = .27$, $p < .01$), *support* ($r = .17$, $p < .01$), *empowerment* ($r = .27$, $p < .01$), *boundaries & expectations* ($r = .21$, $p < .01$), and *constructive use of time* ($r = .25$, $p < .01$) (Table 2).

Table 1: Cross-tabulation Analysis of Thriving and Demographic Variables of Norwegian Youth.

Demographic variables		Number of thriving indicators reported								Total
		0 n (%)	1 n (%)	2 n (%)	3 n (%)	4 n (%)	5 n (%)	6 n (%)	7 n (%)	N (%)
Gender	Male	17 (48.6)	22 (52.4)	34 (45.9)	67 (49.6)	58 (36.3)	40 (40.0)	21 (53.8)	1 (100.0)	260 (44.4)
	Female	18 (51.4)	20 (47.6)	40 (54.1)	68 (50.4)	102 (63.7)	60 (60.0)	18 (46.2)	0 (0.0)	326 (55.6)
	Total	35 (6.0)	42 (7.2)	74 (12.6)	135 (23.0)	160 (27.3)	100 (17.1)	39 (6.7)	1 (0.2)	586 (100.0)
Age	15	2 (6.5)	3 (7.5)	3 (4.5)	8 (6.5)	4 (2.8)	8 (8.9)	1 (2.9)	0 (0.0)	29 (5.5)
	16	9 (29.0)	17 (42.5)	19 (28.8)	42 (33.9)	73 (51.0)	38 (42.2)	21 (60.0)	1 (100)	220 (41.5)
	17	13 (41.9)	11 (27.5)	25 (37.9)	41 (33.1)	43 (30.1)	30 (33.3)	8 (22.9)	0 (0.0)	171 (32.3)
	18	7 (22.6)	8 (20.0)	16 (24.2)	30 (24.2)	23 (16.1)	12 (13.3)	5 (14.3)	0 (0.0)	101 (19.1)
	19	0 (0.0)	1 (2.5)	3 (4.5)	3 (2.4)	0 (0.0)	2 (2.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	9 (1.7)
	Total	31 (5.8)	40 (7.5)	66 (12.5)	124 (23.4)	143 (27.0)	90 (17.0)	35 (6.6)	1 (0.2)	530 (100)
Father's education	High school or less	7 (22.6)	7 (18.9)	14 (24.1)	18 (15.0)	15 (10.8)	15 (16.1)	3 (8.3)	0 (0.0)	79 (15.3)
	More than high school	24 (77.4)	30 (81.1)	44 (75.9)	102 (85.0)	124 (89.2)	78 (83.9)	33 (91.7)	1 (100)	436 (84.7)
	Total	31 (6.0)	37 (7.2)	58 (11.3)	120 (23.3)	139 (27.0)	93 (18.1)	36 (7.0)	1 (0.2)	515 (100)
Mother's education	High school or less	6 (18.8)	2 (5.6)	12 (20.0)	22 (17.7)	18 (11.8)	19 (20.2)	2 (5.6)	0 (0.0)	81 (15.1)
	More than high school	26 (81.3)	34 (94.4)	48 (80.0)	102 (82.3)	135 (88.2)	75 (79.8)	34 (94.4)	1 (100)	455 (84.9)
	Total	32 (6.0)	36 (6.7)	60 (11.2)	124 (23.1)	153 (28.5)	94 (17.5)	36 (6.7)	1 (0.2)	536 (100)

Table 2: Correlation Analyses of Demographic Variables, Developmental Assets and Thriving.

Variables	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Gender	.01	.02	-.01	.14**	.16**	.21**	-.14**	.13**	.06	.14**	.02	.05
2. Age		-.13**	-.14**	-.08	-.11*	-.03	-.05	-.08	.03	-.15**	-.11*	-.12**
3. Father's level of education			.34**	.00	.04	.04	.03	.05	.05	.04	-.03	.10*
4. Mother's level of education				-.05	-.03	-.01	.04	.12**	.04	.08	.05	.02
5. Commitment to learning					.54**	.57**	.43**	.40**	.46**	.46**	.22**	.34**
6. Positive values						.65**	.38**	.31**	.34**	.41**	.18**	.36**
7. Social competencies							.47**	.35**	.43**	.48**	.17**	.32**
8. Positive identity								.36**	.51**	.39**	.23**	.27**
9. Support									.57**	.63**	.30**	.17**
10. Empowerment										.62**	.31**	.27**
11. Boundaries & Expectations											.30**	.21**
12. Constructive use of time												.25**
13. Thriving												-
Descriptive analysis												
Range	15-19	1-5	1-5	0-7	0-7	0-7	0-4	0-7	0-6	0-9	0-4	0-7
Mean (SD)	16.70 (.90)	4.42 (.93)	4.56 (.82)	5.51 (1.79)	5.50 (1.66)	5.90 (1.61)	2.68 (1.48)	4.84 (1.74)	5.13 (1.27)	6.85 (1.87)	1.73 (1.00)	3.37 (1.55)

Note. Gender: (1) male and (2) female – mean (SD): 1.56 (0.50); * p <.05; ** p <.01.

Regression Analysis for Demographic Variables, Developmental Assets, and Thriving

The regression analysis revealed a significant association between the asset categories and thriving, $F(12, 452) = 10.23$, $p < .001$. In model 1, the demographic variables, gender, age, and parents' educational level explained 2.3% of the variance in thriving ($R^2 = .02$). Including the developmental assets in model 2, the explained variance rose to 21.4%, indicating that the asset categories explained 19.1% of the variance in thriving. *Commitment to learning*

(β = .14, $p < .05$), *positive values* (β = .19, $p < .01$), *empowerment* (β = .13, $p < .05$) and *constructive use of time* (β = .17, $p < .01$) had a small yet significant influence on thriving (Table 3). Hence, the more participants reported these assets, the more they also reported the thriving indicators. For the demographic variables, age was observed to be a significant variable in model 1 (β = -.11, $p < .05$), where younger participants reported more thriving indicators than their older counterparts. In addition, father's educational level was marginally associated with thriving, while gender and mother's education did not show any significant association with thriving (Table 3).

Table 3: Regression Analyses of Thriving among Norwegian Youth: The Role of Developmental Assets.

Model		Unstandardised Coefficient		Standardised Coefficient	t	Sig.	95% CI of B	
		B	S.E.	β			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	5.83	1.51		3.87	.00	2.87	8.79
	Gender	.14	.14	.05	.98	.33	-.14	.42
	Age	-.19	.08	-.11	-2.36	.02	-.35	-.03
	Father's education	.38	.21	.09	1.78	.08	-.04	.79
	Mother's education	-.10	.21	-.02	-.48	.63	-.52	.32
2	(Constant)	2.32	1.44		1.61	.11	-.51	5.15
	Gender	-.00	.14	-.00	-.04	.97	-.28	.27
	Age	-.13	.08	-.08	-1.73	.09	-.28	.02
	Father's education	.34	.19	.08	1.77	.08	-.04	.72
	Mother's education	-.02	.20	-.00	-.09	.93	-.40	.37
	Commitment to learn	.12	.05	.14	2.46	.01	.02	.22
	Positive values	.18	.05	.19	3.32	.00	.07	.28
	Social competencies	.07	.06	.07	1.08	.28	-.05	.18
	Positive identity	.05	.06	.05	.94	.35	-.06	.16
	Support	-.07	.05	-.07	-1.27	.20	-.17	.04
	Empowerment	.15	.07	.13	2.08	.04	.00	.30
	Boundaries & Expectations	-.06	.05	-.08	-1.22	.22	-.16	.04

Model	Unstandardised Coefficient		Standardised Coefficient	t	Sig.	95% CI of B	
	B	S.E.	β			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Constructive use of time	.26	.07	.17	3.67	.00	.12	.39

Note. S.E. – Standard Error; CI – Confidence interval.

Discussion

General Findings

Based on the theoretical framework and previous PYD research, the current paper explored the extent to which young people in Norway report developmental assets and examined the hypothesis that youth who experience more developmental assets would also report more thriving indicators. The results show that Norwegian youth reported more than 50% of the assets in each of the eight asset categories, except for *constructive use of time*. Moreover, all eight asset categories were positively related to the thriving variable in the correlation analysis, while in the regression analysis only four asset categories (*commitment to learning*, and *positive values* as internal assets, and *empowerment* and *constructive use of time* as external assets) maintained their significant association with thriving. Thus, our hypothesis on the developmental assets' cumulative effect on thriving or positive development was confirmed, although not for all of the asset categories. Nevertheless, due to the positive correlations that were observed among the asset categories, the influence of those categories that were no longer significant in the regression analysis may have been indirect through the asset categories that remained significant. For the demographic variables, age and father's education were significantly associated (albeit marginally) with thriving, where young participants relative to older counterparts, and participants who reported that their father had a high education compared to those who reported a low educational level for their father were more likely to report the thriving indicators.

Developmental Assets, Demographics and Thriving

Earlier studies in the USA (Scales et al., 2000), Africa (Adams et al., 2018), Europe (Soares et al., 2019) and Latin America (Manrique-Millones et al., 2021) examined and established the facilitating role played by developmental

assets on positive youth outcomes, such as thriving, academic performance, life satisfaction and mental well-being. The current findings concerning Norwegian youth are supported by these earlier studies. Moreover, our finding that *constructive use of time* significantly predicts thriving is consistent with findings reported by Cooper and colleagues (1999), who observed that after-school activities significantly predict adolescents' academic achievement, an important indicator of thriving. Our findings are therefore in line with both the PYD theoretical assumption and empirical evidence on the role of these assets in promoting youth development. While in Scales and colleagues' (2000) study, the developmental assets explained between 10% and 43% of the variance in the thriving indicators, in our study the developmental assets explained 19% of the variance in thriving, which was assessed as a composite factor reflecting the number of thriving indicators reported by Norwegian youth. While our explained variance falls within the range of Scales and colleagues, it appears from this previous study that some thriving indicators are better predicted by the assets than others. Further, the current findings indicate that thriving among young people in Norway is not only determined by developmental assets. More importantly, despite Norway's individualistic perspective, it appears that for young people both personal and contextual resources are significant facilitators of thriving.

That Norwegian youth reported over half the assets in all eight asset categories except for *constructive use of time* shows that Norway has what Benson (2007) labelled an asset-building society and asset-building community (i.e., the appropriate policies, programmes, norms, and practices). Thus, in line with the current findings, Norwegian youth contexts appear to be able to nurture and offer developmental assets that represent the resources/opportunities young people need to thrive. These are seen in the country's youth policy and initiatives on the local, national, and international levels (Bergan, 2017; Youth Policy: Norway, 2014) along with their strong focus on gender equality in rights and opportunities (Equality, 2014).

For the demographic factors, gender correlated with several of the asset categories, with girls reporting more assets than boys, except for *positive identity* where boys reported more assets. Still, gender and mother's education were not significant predictors of thriving in the multivariate analysis, while the significance of age and father's education was marginal. Although marginal, the significant role of fathers' education compared

to the non-significant influence of gender in the multivariate analysis is implied in the Norwegian Public Reports (Norges offentlige utredninger, 2019) that showed that parents' educational background had a greater effect on children's school performance than gender. As for age, the observation that younger participants reported more of the assets and thriving indicators than older participants has been consistently reported in prior studies (Benson et al., 1998; Scales et al., 2000; Wiium, 2017). One possible explanation for this age difference may be due to the positive correlations between age, maturity and independence such that, due to their maturity and search for independence, older youth may not have access to or find some assets as relevant compared to younger youth.

Limitations of the Study

The present study has some limitations that are worth mentioning. The data used in our study were cross-sectional, which implies we are unable to assess the developmental trajectories of the assets, and thus also unable to tell the variation or stability that may occur over time. In addition, we could not establish causation concerning the association between the assets and thriving, even though the theoretical argument that the assets facilitate thriving is supported by several empirical studies. Nonetheless, in future research, longitudinal studies could be carried out to address some of these limitations.

Another limitation is that the questionnaire we used was developed with American samples and might therefore not adequately capture all the resources and opportunities available to young people in Norway. For example, to measure *constructive use of time*, one item was whether youth went to a church or a mosque for at least 1 hour per week. This question might be less relevant for Norwegian youth because over the years Norway has become a secular country with ever fewer religious inhabitants, whereas worship services have seen a reduction since the beginning of the century (Statistics Norway, 2016). In addition, the low Cronbach's alpha of the composite variable *thriving* may indicate that thriving among Norwegian youth was not sufficiently assessed by some of the items that were studied. It is also possible that the young people's responses were affected by social desirability bias, whereby they tended to over-report more desirable developmental assets and thriving indicators. These limitations could be addressed in future studies by using qualitative methods to probe into the

actual assets and thriving indictors of youth, including those unique to the Norwegian context.

Finally, our sample was from one of Norway's largest cities, and might not fully represent the Norwegian youth population. A more representative and inclusive sample that involves youth from different geographical locations, diverse ethnicities and other backgrounds could be utilised in future research to tackle the limitations posed by the unrepresentativeness of our sample.

Implications and Conclusion

Despite the limitations of the study, the findings hold some implications for further research, policy, and practice. For research, the fact that PYD is a relatively new research topic in Norway means future research could build on the present study by exploring the resources/opportunities of diverse youth in Norway and assessing how these contribute to thriving and positive development over time. The research might also focus on demographic factors, such as gender, age, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, as well as other indicators of well-being, like mental health, which may prove essential for thriving. It might also be interesting to extend the research to other Scandinavian countries and examine how the youth in those countries are experiencing developmental assets. Given that Scandinavian countries are very politically and culturally similar, research on how the different countries' political priorities and initiatives are nurturing developmental assets may help to inform programmes and policies across the region.

Concerning implications for policy, the current study and earlier ones show that resources and opportunities positively influence thriving, academic performance, life satisfaction and mental well-being. Therefore, policy measures that ensure that all young people have access to developmental assets in their context must be given priority. A UNICEF report (Adamson, 2013) shows that Norway has taken many important steps to ensure thriving among its youth, although there is still much in Norway's youth contexts that could be improved.

As for practical implications, Benson and colleagues (2011) argued that resource-building programmes have a positive effect on the experience of developmental assets in youth. In one study, they observed that youth in Bangladesh had a 30% increase in assets after a 6–9-month resource-building programme, while in the Philippines a 12% increase in assets after a

3–9-month programme was detected. These earlier findings show that resource-building programmes are effective. Political initiatives and priorities aimed at youth in Norway can accordingly ensure that practices and norms in various youth contexts are nurturing all the resources and opportunities that young people need to thrive.

In conclusion, our study, like earlier ones, found a significant association between several developmental assets and thriving, which reflected good physical health, leadership, delayed gratification, overcoming adversity, valuing diversity, school success, and helping others. However, since PYD is a relatively new field of research in Norway it is important to continue the research on youth's developmental assets in order to explore their significant role in the thriving and healthy development of Norwegian youth. While it was found that youth in Norway have access to several of the developmental assets being assessed, it is important to explore assets that are also unique to the Norwegian context. Doing this within a longitudinal framework would provide insight into how the link between developmental assets and thriving develop over time. Policies and programmes that will foster developmental assets in various youth contexts are also called for since youth will not only thrive but will be placed on a healthy trajectory into adulthood.

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