
Original Article

The Linkage Between Aging, Migration, and Resilience: Resilience in the Life of Older Turkish and Moroccan Immigrants

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Abstract

Objectives: Older immigrants are affected by an accumulation of adversities related to migration and aging. This study investigates resilience in older immigrants by examining the resources they use to deal with these adversities in the course of their lives.

Methods: Data from 23 life-story interviews with Turkish and Moroccan immigrants aged 60–69 years living in the Netherlands.

Results: The circumstances under which individuals foster resilience coincide with four postmigration life stages: settling into the host society, maintaining settlement, restructuring life postretirement, and increasing dependency. Resources that promote resilience include education in the country of origin, dealing with language barriers, having two incomes, making life meaningful, strong social and community networks, and the ability to sustain a transnational lifestyle traveling back and forth to the country of origin. More resilient individuals invest in actively improving their life conditions and are good at accepting conditions that cannot be changed.

Discussion: The study illustrates a link between conditions across life stages, migration, and resilience. Resilient immigrants are better able to accumulate financial and social and other resources across life stages, whereas less resilient immigrants lose access to resources in different life stages.

Keywords: Aging, Life stages, Migration, Resilience, Resources

In the mid-1960s and 1970s, the Netherlands witnessed an influx of Turkish and Moroccan immigrants (Guiraudon, 2014). While part of this influx resulted from bilateral agreements with Turkey and Morocco, many immigrants arrived on their own initiative. The idea was that these predominantly male immigrants would do unskilled manual labor for a number of years and then return to their country of origin. Contrary to the expectations, however, few labor immigrants returned. Instead, in the mid-1980s, there was

another wave of Turkish and Moroccan migration to the Netherlands via family reunification. Women and children rejoined their husbands and fathers in the Netherlands (de Haas & Fokkema, 2010). These immigrants are currently aging in the Netherlands and constitute a growing portion of the older urban population (Statistics Netherlands, 2018). They exhibit vulnerabilities due to an accumulation of adversities during their lifetime, including a low socioeconomic position (Snel, Brugers, & Leerkes, 2007),

poor health (Denktaş, 2011), loneliness (Klok, van Tilburg, Suanet, Fokkema, & Huisman, 2017), and discrimination and segregation (Pettigrew et al., 1997).

The association with vulnerabilities obscures that migration histories and experiences are quite diverse (Palmberger, 2017). Moreover, migration not only involves vulnerability. Immigrants, by definition, moved away from structural inequality and poverty in the hope of a better future, which suggests resilience (Adger, 2000). This study focuses on resilience in older Turkish and Moroccan immigrants in the Netherlands and poses the question: Which resources do immigrants use to deal with adversities related to migration and aging and how do these and other resources help them in the course of various life stages?

Combining Resilience Perspectives

Ungar, Ghazinour, and Richter (2013, p. 225) define resilience as “the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to the psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources that sustain their well-being, and their capacity individually and collectively to negotiate for these resources to be provided and experienced in culturally meaningful ways.” Resilience research identifies resources that help individuals deal with chronic or acute adversities, that is, in the individuals’ physical and social ecologies or psychological and genetic predispositions. Resources may ameliorate the negative effects of adversities if they are used to sustain well-being and if individuals have the discursive power to define themselves and their coping strategies as successful (Ungar, 2010).

Resilience resources are studied in two relevant but separate strains of research, that is, on older populations and on younger immigrants. The first strain of research examines recently migrated domestic workers and refugees. Studies address adaptations to socioeconomic adversity (Wong & Song, 2008), demands of migration including discrimination, language difficulties (Aroian & Norris, 2000), and homelessness (Eggerman & Panter-Brick, 2010). Individual, community, and societal resources are important to the resilience in these groups (Siriwardhana, Ali, Roberts, & Stewart, 2014). In young domestic workers, an active attitude at the early stages of migration provides a key attribute for fulfilling goals, alleviating stress, and promoting well-being (van der Ham, Ujano-Batangan, Ignacio, & Wolffers, 2014). It seems crucial that the initial need or wish to migrate is met regardless of whether it involves personal safety or economic security.

In older adults, studies address positive adaptation to socioeconomic adversity (Kok, van Nes, Deeg, Widdershoven, & Huisman, 2018), bereavement (Bonanno et al., 2002), health challenges (Browne-Yung, Walker, & Luszcz, 2017) and changes in social roles (Aléx, 2010). Resilient responses result from a combination of individual, community and societal resources that help maintain well-being in old age (Windle, 2011). Narrative

analysis reveals that resilience encompasses balancing vulnerability and well-being across a range of areas including positive individual attitudes (micro level), social networks (meso level) and state-funded services (macro level) (Wiles, Wild, Kerse, & Allen, 2012).

The question is whether resources that prove useful to older native or younger immigrant populations are also useful to former labor immigrants and their wives. The migration perspective views migration as an impactful life event (Montes de Oca, García, Sáenz, & Guillén, 2011) and holds that postmigration resilience may be stimulated by fulfilling the goals of migration and settling into the new country. However, migration studies have not investigated what happens to the immigrants’ resilience afterwards. This is important because challenges right after migration differ from those facing older immigrants later in life (Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987).

Gerontological studies have not established how aging in a migration context can impact resilience. Challenges of aging in a migration context differ from those in native populations. For example, immigrants develop physical limitations at a much earlier life stage. This raises the question of how they deal with more health problems and less well-being (Bolzman, Poncioni-Derigo, Vial, & Fibbi, 2004) than their nonimmigrant peers. In addition, they might have to deal with adversities like language barriers (Pot, Keijzer, & De Bot, 2018), discrimination, and segregation (Burholt, 2004).

The Linkage Between Aging, Migration, and Resilience

The gerontology and migration studies research traditions suggest that four life stages are particularly important. The first is *settling into the host society* and includes the experience of migration and the period of settlement (Bhugra, 2004). The second is *maintaining settlement* after the initial demands have been met and the immigrants have found a job and housing. The third is derived from the *third age* concept introduced by Laslett (1987) and is marked by retirement, the end of parental responsibilities, and personal fulfillment. It is referred to as *restructuring life post-retirement*. The fourth stage or *fourth age* is when health problems and frailty emerge. Marked by decrepitude and in the end death, it is referred to as the stage of *increasing dependency*. The four stages are not completely discrete nor does every individual necessarily pass through every stage (Bhugra & Becker, 2005). But the stages do provide a framework for identifying resources of resilience.

Method

Data Collection

Respondents were selected from a sample of Turkish and Moroccan immigrants of the Longitudinal Aging Study

Amsterdam (LASA) (Klokgieters, van Tilburg, Deeg, & Huisman, 2018). The original sample consisted of 478 immigrants, 269 from Turkey and 209 from Morocco. We randomly selected an equal number of males and females of Moroccan Arabic and Turkish descent. The respondents were notified by mail and visited a week later by the first author and a research assistant who spoke Moroccan Arabic (Darija) or Turkish. A total of 37 of the 80 respondents who were approached refused to participate, often because they had no time or were too tired to participate. Another 20 were not included because they were physically unable to do an interview or were not at home at the time of the visit. The data include a total of 23 respondents, 10 born in Turkey and 13 born in Morocco (Table 1).

Interviewing Immigrants

Issues involving language barriers and the vulnerable position of an older, marginalized group were anticipated (Zubair & Victor, 2015). We collaborated with two bilingual female research assistants who were informed about the method and topic of the study. The assistants were involved in translating the topic list. The meaning of the words were discussed in Dutch, Darija, and Turkish. If respondents were unclear or drifted away from the topic during the interview, the assistants were instructed

to interrupt and steer them back, clarify statements, or ask probing questions. If a respondent’s answer was long, unclear, or emotional, the assistants were instructed to summarize rather than give a full translation of the answer. The summary focused on resources, adversities, and important life events. We worked collectively during the interview. The principal researcher had a coaching role in initiating and determining the topics and supervising the assistants and asking probing questions.

Interviews

The interviews started with the question “What is going well in your life?” The respondents were asked about their views on growing older and their life before, during and after migration. Meanwhile, we came across adversities experienced by respondents. We explored their resilience by asking about each adversity, how it was experienced, why it was an adversity, which resources were used, and whether the respondent felt these resources had helped. We concluded the interviews by asking broader evaluative questions such as which resources have been most helpful in their life, what period was the hardest, and whether their personal dreams had come true.

The interviews lasted between 1 and 2 hr. The interviews were tape recorded, except the interviews with two

Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents

Pseudonym	Country and area of origin	Sex	Age	Year of migration	Language interview	Employed	Education
Mr. A	Rural Turkey	Male	68	1973	Turkish ^b	Not	Low
Mr. B	Rural Turkey	Male	68	1973	Turkish	Not	Low
Mr. C	Urban Turkey	Male	66	1974	Turkish	Not	Low
Mr. D	Urban Turkey	Male	60	1973	Turkish	Not	Low
Mr. E	Urban Turkey	Male	68	1973	Turkish	Not	Low
Mr. F	Rural Turkey	Male	64	1973	Dutch	Not	Middle
Mrs. G	Urban Turkey	Female	69	1972	Turkish	Not	Low
Mrs. H	Urban Turkey	Female	65	1976	Turkish	Not	Low
Mrs. I	Urban Turkey	Female	65	1979	Turkish	Not	Low
Mrs. J	Urban Turkey	Female	62	2001	Turkish	Not	Low
Mr. K	Rural Morocco	Male	69	1970	Darija	Not	Low
Mr. L	Rural Morocco	Male	68	1987	Darija	Not	Middle
Mr. M	Rural Morocco	Male	67	1976	Darija	Not	Low
Mr. N	Urban Morocco	Male	66	1970	Dutch	Not	Low
Mr. O	Urban Morocco	Male	63	1987	Dutch	Not	Low
Mr. P	Rural Morocco	Male	69	1966	Dutch	Not	Middle
Mrs. Q	Urban Morocco	Female	66	1974	Darija	Not	Low
Mrs. R	Urban Morocco	Female	65	1971	Dutch	Yes	Middle
Mrs. S	Rural Morocco	Female	65	1983	Dutch	Yes	Low
Mrs. T	Urban Morocco	Female	64	1980	Dutch	Yes	Middle
Mrs. U ^a	Urban Morocco	Female	63	1976	Darija	Not	Low
Mrs. V	Urban Morocco	Female	62	1980	Dutch	Not	High
Ms. W ^a	Urban Morocco	Female	62	1981	Darija	Not	Low

Note: ^aOnly a summary available because making a recording was not permitted by the respondent. ^bTranslations from Turkish or Darija to Dutch were done by research assistants. As recommended by van Nes, Abma, Jonsson, and Deeg (2010), for the translations of quotations from Dutch to English, the first author worked side by side with a native English editor skilled in Dutch.

females who refused, in which case notes were taken and a summary was made afterwards. The other interviews were transcribed verbatim. Spouses or other relatives (usually young grandchildren) were sometimes present during the interviews. Although this sometimes caused interference, it usually helped to clarify issues.

Analysis

Thematic analysis was conducted (Braun & Clarke, 2006), geared towards identifying, analyzing, and reporting themes within the data. The first stage involved coding the interviews. This was done by devoting special attention to adversities due to aging or migration, and to life stages. The second stage involved finding themes. Codes linked to adversities and resources were selected and the answers were read several times to discover possible patterns. At the third stage, the themes were reviewed. Since the aim was to study resilience, we drew up a classification of the resources or contexts that appeared to contribute to resilience. We needed a broad picture of what the interviews were portraying in general to get a sense of what resources were used throughout the respondents' life. At the fourth stage of the analysis, we integrated the material in an inclusive fashion. Themes were formulated on the resources that led to resilience when dealing with the stress of aging in a new country. Prior to progressing from one stage to another, the result was evaluated by the coauthors.

Results

Stage 1: Settling Into the Host Society

Two groups of the respondents were identified. The first group, labeled the *internally motivated immigrants*, mentioned some form of active decision making during the first stage and had problem-focused coping styles (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). They admitted that their decision to migrate was based on hopes for a better future. The second group, labeled the *externally motivated immigrants*, reported passivity in their decision and emotion-focused coping styles. They moved because of pressure from their families or without a clear idea about the future. Both groups knew very little about the Netherlands, had housing problems and felt deprived of their social status. The groups, however, responded differently to the adversities. The internally motivated immigrants seemed unpleasantly surprised by the harsh realities of migration. They reported having fallen from their position in the country of origin or missing their family. Mr. P said "Did I leave my country for a cleaning job? No." Mr. A repeatedly mentioned missed his wife. The externally motivated were more indifferent to the experience. They explained that being young was a good bandage. Having new experiences and working helped them accept their situation. For example, Mr. F. said, "Well I lost everything anyway, so you just resign yourself to it." Table 2 presents the resources during this experience. Information on the groups that predominantly used the resources are provided in the [supplementary material](#).

Using Inventive Ways to Obtain a Job

Both groups mentioned that the first thing they did when they arrived was finding a job, which was not too difficult. The quote below illustrates how Mr. P found a job.

"The only word that I'd learned from that uncle of mine, was 'work'. So I went looking for work. (...) I couldn't tell the difference between houses and a factory, everything looked alike. That was the only thing that I knew from Morocco: a chimney. The first chimney I saw, I said 'Ah, a factory'. I went there and asked."

Mr. P not only talked about how readily available jobs were, he described the creative way he used this situation to find a job for himself. Due to unfamiliarity with the Netherlands, the only way to find factories was by looking for chimneys. Mr. P was not alone in finding a job this way. His example shows how respondents, in interaction with the environment, were able to identify and obtain jobs.

Using Social Contacts to Find Housing

Both groups talked about how they sought social support. They contacted members of their network who migrated earlier to help them find a way to meet their basic needs. One Moroccan used a contact from his home town to find food and shelter.

"I had the address of someone from [village of origin]. The taxi took us there, but we couldn't find him. He wouldn't be home before eleven that night. I asked for one of his sons. We found him and he took us to a house. We were given food." (Mr. M)

Taking Advantage of Newfound Freedom

Especially those who were externally motivated used gaining new experiences as a distraction from daily struggles. They recounted enjoying the freedom they gained by migrating to the Netherlands. For example, some men mentioned going to bars, dating women, and feeling less "watched":

"I began working at [factory name], in [city]. And then, the more you work, the more nice girls you see, and then you are a handsome guy and then you go out with that one, and then that one". (Mr. F)

Meeting Dutch women helped the men to understand the Dutch context and learn some Dutch words and offered a distraction. So, meeting women seemed a useful resource to help them adjust to the unfamiliar environment.

Resigning to the Situation

Most of the externally motivated respondents and some of the internally motivated described their migration as merely adjusting and moving on. They felt there was no other option and they could not change the situation in any

significant way. Faced with a situation like this, it seemed better to resign than to fight it. They predominantly sought distraction in their jobs, which they did 6 or 7 days a week, and sent remittances to their families.

Dealing with Language Barriers

Some of the internally motivated respondents benefited from the education they had before migrating to the Netherlands. This was apparent from how they coped with language difficulties. Immigrants from Morocco mentioned using their French language skills. Mr. P, who actively employed strategies to learn Dutch quickly.

“I very deliberately decided to live with a Dutch family and rent a room from them. So that I’d feel forced to speak Dutch and (...). And then, right away, the first year, I also joined a [sports] club. And so I became the first Moroccan in the region who was in a [sports] club. Well, then you’re obliged to speak Dutch if you’re in a Dutch team with Dutch team mates.” (Mr. P)

Stage 2: Maintaining Settlement

After the initial stage of migration, the housing situations more or less under control. Despite their doubts about whether to stay in the Netherlands, the respondents realized their stay was going to be longer than expected. In the internally motivated group, a further division could be discerned. First, there was a group that capitalized on the education they had prior to migration and used these opportunities to improve their situation. Like Mr. P in the previous stage, these immigrants were able to obtain better jobs and in some cases a higher education. We call them the *educated internally motivated immigrants*. Others were either not educated or unable to use their education. The externally motivated immigrants did not accumulate resources at this life stage. Most of them remained largely focused on work. Resigning to the situation remained the main resilience resource. The resources during this stage and the groups who predominantly used them are listed in Table 2.

Using Opportunities for Social Mobility

Educated internally motivated immigrants often enhanced their job security by taking advantage of opportunities for social mobility. Important competencies included having an education, a driver’s license and Dutch language proficiency. For example Mr. P, who learned Dutch quickly, benefited from being one of the few workers who spoke Dutch.

“They asked whether there was anyone in the hall who could translate for them. And so I stuck my hand up and then acted, with what little Dutch I had, acted as translator. A week later, this woman came up to me

Table 2. Summary of Resources Across Stages

Category	Resources
<i>Stage 1, settling in the host society</i>	
Societal	Using inventive ways to obtain a job (R1) Using social contacts to find housing (R2)
Community	Taking advantage of newfound freedom (R3)
Individual	Resigning to the situation (R4) Dealing with language barriers (R5)
<i>Stage 2, maintaining settlement</i>	
Societal	Using opportunities for social mobility (R6) Obtaining financial security (R7)
Community	Seeking social and community support (R9)
Individual	Recognizing and negotiating (R8) Profiting from two cultural backgrounds (R10)
<i>Stage 3, restructuring life postretirement</i>	
Community	Feeling valuable through helping others (R11) Being able to support a circular lifestyle (R12)
Individual	Emphasizing success in prior life stages (R13)
<i>Stage 4, increasing dependency</i>	
Societal	Having made sustainable investments (R14) Confronting discrimination (R15)
Community	Participating in family life (R16)
Individual	Dreaming about returning to the country of origin (R17) Making meaning (R18)

in private: ‘Would you want to act as an intermediary during consultation hours? We have language problems with Moroccans.’ (...) After that, I attended the social academy to get the right diploma for social work.”

He was able to attend college while working and earn a better salary and a better position for himself. Some of the other respondents also went back to school in the hopes of getting a better position. Mrs. V, who learned Dutch:

“I didn’t want to learn it. I thought, yes it’s hard, where would I have to start? I realized only later that I had to learn the language in order to function properly. You are obliged to. Luckily I did it.”

Obtaining Financial Security

The uneducated internally motivated respondents enhanced their economic security with two instead of one income in the household.

“Yes, ha-ha. Surely, of course. Why not? Imagine if one person has to work to provide for everybody in the house. That’s impossible. You also have to work if you can. I did my best to work” (Mrs. H)

Having a job had an additional advantage for women. It gave them a sense of purpose and independence.

Seeking Social and Community Support

The respondents had to juggle multiple roles including taking care of their families while working long hours. Uneducated internally motivated immigrants were good at asking for help. It seemed important for their network to include individuals from various social and ethnic backgrounds. Networks were sources of babysitters, for example, and gave the respondents a sense of belonging. Mrs. G recounted how important her Dutch neighbors were when she worked long hours and had to care of her children.

“Sometimes my husband looked after the children, and sometimes my neighbor did. I’d come home from work and then I had to wash clothes by hand and cook for the next day. It was very hard.(...) Sometimes if you had a good neighbor, she’d help you out. A Dutch grandpa and grandma, they helped by looking after the children.”

Recognizing and Negotiating

Although there were plenty of blue collar jobs when they arrived, the respondents mentioned budget cuts and job changes in mid-life. Recognizing and negotiating was a useful resource for dealing with the demands of a busy family life or job insecurity. Some women won their employers’ sympathy by cooking for their coworkers. This earned them special benefits such as permission to leave early to take care of their children. Another example is how Mr. E dealt with job insecurity:

“I heard that my department was going to close. I immediately went to the staff manager. If I’d only wanted to do day shifts, I wouldn’t have got it – I knew that they didn’t have that option. I wanted to do three shifts and I knew that they needed people in other departments. So, that’s how I changed my job.” (Mr. E)

Profiting from Two Cultural Backgrounds

Respondents from all the groups mentioned feeling in between cultures, neither fully Turkish or Moroccan nor fully Dutch. There were differences in how they dealt with this feeling. The educated internally motivated respondents who spoke Dutch tended to see having two cultural backgrounds as a toolkit they could use freely. Mrs. V was able to navigate through environments and understood what was expected in each environment:

“Try to learn the good things from Dutch society and adopt the good things from Moroccan society, and that’s how you shape your life. For example, the appointments here and the stinginess of Dutch people – I don’t want that [laughs]. So then I take the Moroccan hospitality. And of the Dutch things, well, being on time, trying to help others, those kinds of things, being polite.”

Immigrants from the uneducated internally motivated and the externally motivated groups made multiple attempts to learn Dutch but failed. They found this frustrating and felt it made them unable to participate in Dutch society. Others were passive about learning Dutch, but said they would have been open to it if they had received an invitation.

Respondent: “But here... We could have come here, but we didn’t.”

Assistant: “Why didn’t you?”

Respondent: “I don’t know. No one asked us to.” (Mrs. G)

Stage 3: Restructuring Life Postretirement

The educated internally motivated respondents and two of the uneducated internally motivated ones experienced a distinct third age. Retired respondents without health problems had often experienced social mobility. Some had attended an educational program and others had benefited from two incomes. They also had an active family life. Table 2 presents important themes related to the resources mentioned by third-agers.

Feeling Valuable Through Helping Others

One resource the respondents mentioned was keeping busy and feeling valuable through helping others. To this end, Mr. N volunteered:

“I like it very much to help those people, older people. (...) Well, that’s just voluntary work; I’m not paid for it. We say in Moroccan, ‘Hasan’, you know.”

In addition to activities involving an official organizational structure, some respondents helped network members. Helping others kept them active and gave them a sense of personal accomplishment and fulfillment that was relevant to them.

Being Able to Support a Circular Lifestyle

Being healthy and having financial resources were preconditions for the third age. For immigrants, it also meant being able to travel back and forth to the country of origin. This enabled them to live half in the Netherlands and see their grandchildren grow up, and half in the country of origin. It gave them a sense of belonging and implied that retirement and aging had advantages as well as disadvantages.

“I spend six months here and six months in Turkey. People sometimes ask me where I prefer it. I like both countries, because I’ve lived in the Netherlands for most of my life. And back then, we didn’t go [to Turkey] so often, only every other year, because we worked. Now it’s better, because we’re older.” (Mrs. H)

Emphasizing Success in Prior Life Stages

Respondents were able to look back on their successes. They prided themselves on past accomplishments and find value in their lives.

"I always say, thank Allah that I had these opportunities. To go to the Netherlands and develop myself further. Perhaps if I'd stayed in Morocco, I would have ended up like my father... But then I wouldn't have achieved what I have achieved now. That's what I'm grateful for." (Mr. P)

Stage 4: Increasing Dependency

Most of the uneducated internally motivated respondents and all of the externally motivated ones experienced health problems after retirement. Their physical problems were why they had to retire. As a result, many were unhappy with this situation. The uneducated internally motivated respondents were equipped to deal with this situation as they often had resources from the previous *settlement* stage. Dealing with this situation was a challenge for the externally motivated respondents.

Having Made Sustainable Investments

Some struggles were related to never having planned their old age in the Netherlands. Mr. P explained how other immigrants ended up with limited financial resources:

"Well, many people didn't know this, but the companies that owned the factories they worked in didn't run a company pension scheme, transfer the retirement funds and some people cashed in their private pensions. I know many Moroccans who did that, because they wanted to buy a house for their family back in Morocco. Now they only have a very small amount extra each month on the top of the state pension of 600 euro a month."

Making no investments at earlier stages and focusing on the present instead of looking forward was a major cause of unhappiness in the *increasing dependency* stage. Mr. B, an externally motivated respondent, explained his regrets as follows:

"I have regrets. Those who stayed put in Turkey, have they been hungry? They're all married now and have children. They have a house. What did we do? We came here, we found Dutch wives and kept ourselves busy with them, and lost our wives in Turkey. No house, nothing, no friends. I have no friends in Turkey and no friends here." (Mr. B)

Confronting Discrimination

Respondents reported that Dutch society has changed since they migrated, and they have felt less welcome over the years. While *third age* respondents said they were able to defend themselves from discrimination by emphasizing

their own success, *fourth age* respondents mentioned difficulties dealing with discriminatory remarks. Mr. E, an uneducated internally motivated respondent, used a strong Turkish accent to humorously remark on a discriminatory comment made at a wedding:

"Some Dutch woman was busy offending people. In the end, though, we got talking. After we'd asked each other how we were and things, she asked how long I'd been living in the Netherlands. To get rid of her, I answered: 1 metre 80. She said nothing, and walked off."

He was an exception. Others were negatively affected by the broader societal changes. Mr. F, an externally motivated respondent, mentioned an encounter with Dutch people speaking negatively about Turkish immigrants, after which he feels lost and dispirited:

"And that mistake I feel now. So, you think, what's the Netherlands given me? Nothing. Now I'm an outcast, who's verbally abused, who's kicked and who's blamed for everything."

Having an Active Family Life

Some of the uneducated internally and externally motivated respondents who were not doing well in terms of their health or finances said their children and grandchildren were important sources of instrumental and emotional support. They acted as caretakers and translators, provided financial aid, and were a source of happiness and emotional support. Respondents prided themselves on having kept their children on the "right path" and stimulating them to get education. Especially if the children were married, respondents felt they done their job as parents.

Dreaming About Returning to the Country of Origin

The desire to return was never truly abandoned. In particular, the externally motivated respondents dreamed of going back. To those without the financial or practical means to do so, the mere vision of what life would be like in the country of origin seemed to be a way to deal with fears about the future. Mr. L mentioned that he wanted to go back because there is more to do there.

"If I had a house there I wouldn't stay here for one minute. (...) What can I do here if I stay? What? At least, if I am there I'm in my own country, I can go out for walks and I can run into old acquaintances."

Finding Meaning

All the externally motivated and some of the uneducated internally motivated respondents dealt with harsh

circumstances by giving meaning to their adversity. In circumstances that cannot be changed, the respondents sought acceptance and fairness. This was done through religion or by giving meaning to the migration experience. Mrs. G mentioned:

“I think it is also an attitude. Even if my circumstances are not so good today, I have a good life and this is just my fate. I accept that and I am on top. I have food and water and I am not doing anyone any harm.”

Mrs. G referred to her religion as a source of support. She believed that living her life the way her religion prescribes is really all she can do to improve her situation. The rest is in the hands of God.

Giving meaning to the migration experience itself was almost paradoxical at this stage, given that those in the fourth age with many adversities dealt with the consequences of their migration. Yet the respondents found ways to look at the bigger picture. Mr. M, an externally motivated respondent, stated that despite the hardships, his main goal in life had been fulfilled:

“My son is twenty-two now, and he can read and write French and English. He was the youngest to come here. He was going to do language training. This was my goal.”

Discussion

This study examines the resources that contribute to lifelong resilience among older first-generation Turkish and Moroccan immigrants living in the Netherlands. Investigating four life stages, *settling into the host society*, *maintaining settlement*, *restructuring life postretirement*, and *increasing dependency*, resources are found at each of the predefined individual, community, and societal levels. We report two major findings. First, structural conditions have shaped the availability and importance of resources. The findings highlight the continuing usefulness of certain resources, in particular education and social support. Other resources are especially useful during specific life stages. Second, there is an enduring linkage between migration and resilience. Over the life stages, the respondents realize that there is very little chance of returning to their country of origin. Yet the feeling of living in between two worlds remains and even seems to grow stronger. In response, some establish a transnational lifestyle by residing in both countries for longer periods of time. Others merely dream of going back one day and use this dream to deal with fears of growing old in the Netherlands or focus on meeting the goals of migration.

Some resources, *taking advantage of newfound freedom* and *resigning to the situation*, are particularly useful at early life stages but not very useful at later ones. Other resources, *having made sustainable investments* and *participating in family life*, are particularly useful at later life stages, that is, “having made sustainable investments” and “participating

in family life”—but not very useful at early ones. We can thus conclude that immigrants who accumulate resources during their lifetime might be less resilient at the initial stages after migration but more resilient at later life stages. Those with a reverse pattern are more resilient at initial life stages but less resilient at later ones. This underlines what [Canvin, Marttila, Burstrom, and Whitehead \(2009\)](#) previously argued, that is, resilience is a process that varies throughout life. In particular, externally motivated immigrants who focus on learning from experiencing freedom or resigning to the situation at their *settling into the host society* stage but neglect family formation or enhancing their income at the *maintaining settlement* stage transit directly to the *increasing dependency* stage. Externally motivated immigrants who suffer from the loss of family and social networks at the *settling into the host society* stage but benefit from family formation and enhancing their financial security at the *maintaining settlement* stage seem to have been better off at the *restructuring life postretirement* and *increasing dependency* stages. Evidently, resources involving family formation and building up a financial reserve at the *maintaining settlement* stage open up opportunities for financing regular visits to the country of origin at the *restructuring life postretirement* stage, and social support from children is similarly important at the *increasing dependency* stage.

Our data show how resources are used at the various life stages. The finding that education contributes positively to one’s life conditions is hardly new. One’s educational level ([Wagnild, 2003](#)) and cognitive skills ([Masten et al., 1999](#)) significantly contribute to resilience. Our data show how the respondents’ educational background facilitated their social mobility at the *maintaining settlement* stage and resulted in an accumulation of resources at the *restructuring life postretirement* stage.

Earlier evidence underscores the roles of social support ([Kok et al., 2018](#)), intergenerational family relationships ([Siriwardhana et al., 2014](#)), and (transnational) belonging ([Klok et al., 2017](#)) in resilience, loneliness, and well-being. However, other studies show that children sometimes play a contradictory role since for various reasons they do not always provide care ([Yerden, 2013](#)). We note that intergenerational family relationships, in particular with children, help deal with language difficulties and provide company. Intergenerational relationships are also mentioned in the context of pride and giving meaning to the decision to migrate. Lastly, belonging to a community at the *maintaining settlement* stage is mentioned as providing instrumental support through the availability of childcare. Perhaps, we find no support for the contradictory role of children in later life because we only include 23 respondents whom this does not apply to.

Our findings confirm that individual and societal conditions simultaneously influence resilience ([Ungar et al., 2013](#)). At the *maintaining settlement* stage, respondents mention increasing job insecurity. This coincides with the end of the economic growth in the 1970s during the oil crisis

(Guiraudon, 2014). This period was marked by a decline in a number of industrial sectors. Very few immigrants were equipped to deal with this as they were highly dependent on their jobs at the *settling into the host society* stage. Our data show how negotiating, having two incomes and social mobility are important in fostering resilience among Turkish and Moroccan immigrants during this economic downturn.

Another influence is apparent during the *restructuring* and *dependency* stages. The simultaneous experiences of diminishing health, financial dependency on the state, a greater awareness of discrimination and less of a feeling of being welcome have left their mark on some of the respondents. These findings corroborate arguments that since the start of the 21st century, Western European societies have exhibited greater moral panic about immigrants with an Islamic background (Vasta, 2007) and exerted more pressure to assimilate (Prins, 2002). This has led to a policy shift from encouraging immigrants to maintain their own cultural traditions in the 1970s to emphasizing assimilation and loyalty to Dutch identity after 2000 (Rouvoet, Eijberts, & Ghorashi, 2017). Our data reflect how this has shaped the experience of aging in a migration context by devaluing the respondents' contribution to society. Few immigrants manage to exhibit resilience by responding to discrimination with humor or emphasizing their own success as active contributors to society. Hence, dwelling on success in prior life stages, making sustainable investments and confronting discrimination are thus resources for resilience during the *restructuring* and *dependency* stages.

A few limitations should be noted. It was observed that women often follow a slightly different migration trajectory than men. This is in line with former studies and may suggest alternative pathways of resilience among women (Aléx, 2010). Future studies might focus on resilience from an intersectionality perspective to further delineate these experiences. Furthermore, our study solely investigates resilience resources among Turkish and Moroccan Arab immigrants. Since we do not include other immigrant groups and given the specific labor migration or family reunification migration history, it is hard to infer conclusions about resilience in other immigrants.

Nevertheless, this paper broadens the perspective on resilience among younger immigrants and older adults by studying resilience in older immigrants. Certain resources are helpful at younger ages but not at older ages and vice versa. For younger immigrants, the study points out the importance of making investments that provide access to sustainable resources. In our sample, this applies to education and social support but there might be many more. It should be noted that many older immigrants do not experience a *third age* and move straight into the *fourth age*. For these individuals, it might be important to strengthen current resources such as meaning making and creating a transnational lifestyle, and to build new resources by strengthening social ties, providing opportunities to feel useful and enhancing self-confidence.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary data is available at *The Journals of Gerontology, Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences* online.

Author contributions

S. S. Klokgetiers was responsible for writing all versions of the manuscript, carrying out thematic analysis, and data collection. M. Huisman conceived the idea of the study as well as provided substantial feedback in all phases of the data collection, data analysis, and writing of the manuscript. T. G. van Tilburg and D. J. H. Deeg provided substantial feedback and textual suggestions on the data collection, data analysis, and versions of the manuscript. M. Huisman and D. J. H. Deeg reviewed codes in the first coding stage.

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Conflict of Interest

None reported.

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