

# Correlation between African Hospitality and Human Flourishing among Young African adults in Kenya

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## Abstract

The practice of the value of hospitality contributes to individual and communal wellbeing in the society. Mental Health Continuum Scale-Short Form (MHC-SF), and Hospitality Scale were used to investigate the correlation between hospitality as a character strength and human flourishing among 308 young African adults. The study found significant positive correlation between the overall hospitality and human flourishing. The findings offer insights into promotion of the practice of hospitality correlation with human flourishing.

**Index Terms-** Hospitality, languishing, character strengths, young adults, human flourishing, positive psychology

## I. INTRODUCTION

The practice of hospitality has been in existence for thousands of years and is rooted in the survival of human species (O’Gorman, 2010). Hospitality is a powerful tool that holds the community together (Moila, 2002). The accounts of hospitality are traceable back to the histories of the Greeks and Romans (Baker, 2013; O’Gorman, 2007; Still, 2006). According to these accounts, hospitality involves a sacred obligation not only to provide somewhere for the visitor to stay, but also to care for the stranger who arrives at the door (Lynch, Molz, McIntosh, Lugosi, & Lashley, 2011; O’Gorman, 2010).

Similarly, hospitality is valued and practiced in African context. According to Healey & Sybertz (1996), African societies hold hospitality as a fundamental cultural, moral, and social value. Thus, hospitality is part and parcel of the African cultural and moral values (Gathogo, 2008; Harris, 1999; Moila, 2002). It is in fact, a way of life that is closely bound with personal and communal relationships (Gathogo, 2008; Gathogo, 2013; Healey & Sybertz, 1996). Hospitality is grounded on the fact that no one exists alone; rather, each and every one is part of the whole community (Gathogo, 2008). Africans interpret hospitality as voluntarily being generous without expecting anything in return (Gathogo, 2008; 2013).

Hospitality is a vital aspect of existence in the African society (Olikenyi, 2001). As a moral value in traditional African society, hospitality is treasured mainly because it promotes individual and communal welfare (Kinoti, 2010; McMahan & Estes, 2011). Values are desirable trans-situational goals that serve as guiding principles in people’s lives (Schwarz, 2006). Positive psychology refers to values as character strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Hospitality is also a Christian Virtue (Ward, 2017). Accordingly, virtues are psychological processes that influence a person’s thoughts and actions for own benefit and that of the society (McCullough & Snyder, 2001). Virtues are expressed by character strengths, and they contribute to subjective, social, and psychological wellbeing (Ryff, 1989; Selvam, 2010; Selvam & Collicutt, 2013; Seymour, 2015).

Hospitality should also be understood within the framework of character strengths. Character strengths are psychological elements or processes that define virtues (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Selvam, 2010; Shogren & Wehmeyer, 2017). Character strengths are unique routes through which virtues are displayed (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Good character is fundamental to human flourishing - psychological, emotional, and social wellbeing (Lamers, 2012; Negovan, 2010; Park & Peterson, 2008). Similarly, African hospitality as a character strength is treasured mainly because it promotes flourishing of individuals and the community (Keyes, 2002; Kinoti, 2010; McMahan & Estes, 2011; Ruch, Proyer, & Weber, 2009).

Human flourishing encompasses positive feelings and ability to function well (Huppert & So, 2013). It also refers to the experience of life going well (Huppert, 2009; Keyes, 2002; Mbuthia, 2016; Singer & Ryff, 1998; So & Huppert, 2013). Flourishing epitomises mental health, and it relates to high levels of mental well-being (Keyes, 2002; Huppert, 2009; Ryff & Singer, 1998). WHO (2001), Lamers, Westerhof, Bohlmeijer, Klooster, and Keyes (2011) define mental wellbeing as a state of wellbeing in which an individual realises his potentials and is able to contribute to the wellbeing of the society. Additionally, flourishing people accept all parts of themselves, feel some degree of mastery of environment, they have a sense of autonomy and an internal locus of control (Harris, 1999; Myers, 2007; Sharma & Tankha, 2014). Further, they have a sense of personal growth in the sense that they are growing, evolving, and changing (Dougherty & Dunn, 2008; Harris, 1999; Keyes 2002; Losada & Fredrickson, 2005; Stone & Stone, 2007). This corresponds to Ryff and Keyes’ (1995) conceptualization of psychological wellbeing thus indicating that flourishing is synonymous to wellbeing.

While the value of hospitality in the promotion of human flourishing in the society is evident, many of its practices and expressions are falling by the wayside due to challenges such as excessive individualism, insecurity, and urbanization. An uncaring

attitude has replaced the caring attitude for the other thus affecting the original spirit of African hospitality (Mutugi, 2001). A telling example are the many signs in front of urban houses that say “mbwa kali” (Swahili for “fierce dog”) even when the house does not have a dog (Healey & Sybertz, 1996). Moreover, unlike in the early African traditions where the door was always open for the visitor (Healey & Sybertz, 1996), the modern homes are secured with strong walls and fortified gates.

Consequently, the caring concern for the ‘other’ is waning away, paving way to sufferings due to ills such as terrorism, war, hunger, and death, leading to languishing in the society due to mental disorders such as depression, stress, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Harris, 1999). For instance, Nakuru county and in a special way Molo and Elburgon sub-counties have suffered greatly as a result of problems such as post-election violence, a clear indication of the absence of the caring concern of the other person. A burning question is whether the shift in the understanding and expression of hospitality among societies has contributed to these kinds of ills.

Additionally, modern economic pressures, task-oriented lifestyle technology, materialism, permissiveness, and science pose challenge to hospitality (Healey & Sybertz, 1996). The pressure of work, making money, and time are competing against the African traditions of personal relationships (Mutugi, 2001). As such, due to the permissive atmosphere in the society, one may find young people failing to respect the law of the land as well as the cultural norms that emphasized the caring of the other (Mutugi, 2001). This gives way to vices such as crime, marriage breakages, abortion, irresponsible parenthood, and increase in street children being witnessed in our modern towns and cities, all of which are against the spirit of African hospitality (Mutugi, 2001).

The study focused on the relationship between hospitality as a character strength and human flourishing among young African adults. The virtue of hospitality is so deeply rooted even among the youth (Chinchen, 2000). In a study of 225 first-year students at the University of Nairobi aged 20-25, 82 % positively responded to the question, “Are African values like hospitality, honesty, and charity very important?” (Mwikamba, 1999; Loginova, Gavriyuk, & Zhivaeva, 2013). Young adulthood is a period when most young adults are at their peak and the body functions well (Crandell, Crandell, & Vander Zanden, 2012). The Kenyan constitution of 2010 defines young adults (youth) as being persons between the ages of 18 and 35 years. This is also referred to as a period of transition to adulthood in human development marked by indicators such as departure from school, entering into job market, leaving parental home, marriage, and starting own family (Juarez & Gayet, 2014). Young adulthood stage is characterised by some key features that include; other-focus, experimentation/possibilities, instability, feeling in-between, self-focus, and identity exploration (Arnett, 2004; Lanctot & Poulin, 2017). One of the major characteristic of a well-adjusted young adult is the internalization of one’s values (Harris, 1999; Nelson & Padilla-Walker, 2013). Layland, Hill, and Nelson (2018) observe that flourishing during young adulthood is connected to internalizing one’s own set of values and beliefs, and taking responsibility toward others in the society.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The sense of hospitality is one of the African basic elements of relations that is still enduring. It is the willingness to give, to help, to assist, to care, to love, and to carry each other’s burdens without necessarily rewards or profits as the motivating factors (Gathogo, 2006; 2008). Essentially, hospitality is among the cardinal values of an indigenous African man that contributes to healthy interpersonal relationships, as well as communal and individual flourishing (Ezenweke & Nwadiolor, 2013; Kinoti, 2010). Values are categorized as character strengths, and they contribute to human flourishing (Lopez & Synder, 2007; Keyes, Fredrickson, & Park, 2012; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Selvam, 2010). However, there has been a marked shift in the understanding and expression of hospitality among societies today. Hospitality is a perennial value in all cultures, but it is being altered as a result of modernization exhibited through trends like urbanization (Healey & Sybertz, 1996; Meler & Lemmer, 2015). Due to the work and demands of urban life, people have less time to welcome others to their homes and offer hospitality (Healey & Sybertz, 1996). This realization was the main reason for this study. However, psychological literature on hospitality as a character and its contribution to human flourishing are limited. Instead, too much of the emphasis is on hospitality as an industry.

### **Objective of the Study**

The study sought to:

1. Find out the correlation between hospitality as a character strength and human flourishing among young African adults.

### **Research Question**

- i. Was there a correlation between hospitality and human flourishing among young African adults in Nairobi and Nakuru counties?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

This chapter is divided into two: theoretical and empirical literature review. The theoretical review brings to fore some existing theoretical perspectives that inform this study. These include: positive psychology perspectives, character strengths, as well as hospitality as a character strength. The empirical literature focuses on correlation between hospitality as a character strength and human flourishing.

### Positive Psychology Perspective

This section presents literature on positive psychology. According to Major (2013), and Bartram and Boniwell (2007) positive psychology makes life worth-living. Positive psychology is the scientific study of wellbeing and optimal functioning that focuses on character strengths, positive emotions, and positively enabling institutions (Keyes, Fredrickson, & Park, 2012; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Its goals are to identify and improve the human strengths and virtues that allow individuals and communities to flourish, thus making life worth-living (Froh, 2004). The basis of positive psychology provides a comprehensive scheme for describing and understanding the wellbeing of an individual or the community (McMahan & Estes, 2011; Muller & Ruch, 2011; Seymour, 2015). Research and intervention based therapy within positive psychology are guided by a list of core virtues and character strengths that promote human wellbeing (Keyes, Fredrickson, & Park, 2012; Lopez & Synder, 2007; Niemiec, 2013; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Peterson, 2006; Seligman, Rashid & Park, 2006; Ruch, Proyer & Weber, 2009; Selvam, 2010; Titus, 2015). Consequently, the most noteworthy mission within positive psychology is to understand and inspire the human flourishing (Czikszentmihalyi & Seligman, 2000; Edwards, 2013; Muller & Ruch, 2011).

The perspectives of positive psychology are relevant to this study because it holds that virtues and character strengths bring about human flourishing; that is, they contribute to the wellbeing of human person (Keyes, Fredrickson, & Park, 2012; Lopez & Synder, 2007; Niemiec, 2013; Park & Peterson, 2008; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Ruch, Proyer & Weber, 2009; Titus, 2016;). Hospitality is perceived as a Christian virtue and value (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Healey and Sybertz (1996) argue, that the virtue of hospitality is valued and practiced across different African cultures and traditions. This brings about the universality of hospitality as a character strength (Edwards, 2013; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Ruch, Proyer & Weber, 2009). If the practice of character strengths is believed to contribute to wellbeing, then the practice of hospitality, which is also perceived as a Christian virtue and value, and thus a character strength, conversely contributes to wellbeing (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Titus, 2016; Ward, 2017).

### Character Strengths

Character strengths are psychological processes that describe virtues (Brdar, Anic, & Rijav, 2011; Niemiec, 2013; Park & Peterson, 2009; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Selvam, 2010). Character refers to those aspects of personality that are morally valued (Park & Peterson, 2008). Character is the entire set of positive traits that have appeared across cultures and throughout history as the psychological pathways or mechanisms that define the virtues (Park & Peterson, 2008; Park & Peterson, 2009; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Further, character strengths are also the subcategories of personality on which moral value is placed (Park & Peterson, 2008). According to Peterson and Seligman (2004), Peterson, Park (2006), and Yearley (1990), character strengths are viewed as a person's nature to desire, feel, and act that involves the use of judgement and leads to recognizable human flourishing. Additionally, character strengths epitomise what virtues we can choose to do or live in order to lead to a flourishing life (Yearley, 1990). Good character is at the core of positive human development (Park & Peterson, 2008). Similar to character strengths, Africans perceive hospitality as moral and cultural values that are real, as well as a way of life (Gathogo, 2006; Harris, 1999; Moila, 2002). The following criteria is used for determining whether a positive characteristic fits in the categories of character strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

The first criterion is concerned with the ubiquity of a strength, which means that it is extensively recognized across cultures. Secondly, a character strength contributes to individual gratification, satisfaction and happiness (Peterson, 2006). Thirdly, a character strength is morally valued in its own right and not noticed because of the outcome it may produce (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). A fourth criterion states that the showing of a strength by one person does not diminish other people; rather it raises those who witness it, producing feelings of admiration, and not jealousy (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). This means that people are attracted to virtuous actions, and good character are sort of admirable characteristics to which most can and do aspire (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

The fifth criterion is that, being able to express the opposite of a recognized strength in an appropriate way counts against regarding it as a character strength. This means that it has obvious antonyms that are negative (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The sixth criterion is that, a strength needs to be visible in the variety of a person's behaviour- thoughts, feelings, and/or actions, in such a way that it is measurable. It should be trait-like in the sense that it can be generalized across situations and is stable across time (Harris, 1999; Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

The seventh criterion is that, strengths differ in terms of being constant (tonic) as opposed to phasic (diminishing depending on their use) (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). A constant characteristic for instance kindness, shows itself steadily in a variety of contexts, which means it is measurable as a trait, whereas a phasic characteristic comes and goes because it is relevant only in certain contexts (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Another criterion is that the strength is distinctive, that is, it is conceptually and empirically essential with

other character strengths. In the eighth criterion a character strength is strikingly active in some individuals (Harris, 1999; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). For instance, different cultures highlight strength of character by providing stories, parables, creeds, sayings, pledges, poems, and songs that feature people who convincingly demonstrate a given positive trait (Burrell, 1997; Kilpatrick, Wolfe, & Wolfe, 1994).

The ninth criterion for a character strength is that, some children or youth are capable of showing it. Conversely, another criterion is the existence of selective absence whereby the strength of character is totally missing in some individuals (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Finally, the larger society provides institutions that become favourable milieu for societal practices and rituals that try to cultivate and sustain the practice of virtues and character strengths (Keyes, Fredrickson, & Park, 2012; Lopez & Synder, 2007; Niemiec, 2013; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Ruch, Proyer, & Weber, 2009; Titus, 2016). For instance, with clear guidance, children and adolescents are allowed to demonstrate and develop a valued characteristic in a safe environment (Unell & Wyckoff, 1995).

Similarly, hospitality satisfies four criteria that determines a character strength (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Firstly, the virtue of hospitality is valued and practiced across different African cultures and traditions (Healey & Sybertz, 1996). This brings about the universality of hospitality as a character strength, which means it is widely recognized across cultures (Ruch, Proyer, & Weber, 2009; Edwards, 2013). Secondly, hospitality is morally valued. According to Harris (1999) and Moila (2002), Africans perceive hospitality as a cultural and moral value that is not abstract but a way of life. Thirdly, hospitality contributes to individual gratification, satisfaction, and happiness (Peterson, 2000). For instance, in Lashley's study on hospitality and hospitableness, one of the respondents admitted feeling happy by seeing the smile on the faces of the guests (Lashley, 2015). Additionally, hospitality does not diminish other people; rather, it raises those who witness it (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). For instance, according to Camargo (2015), hospitality brings about feelings of integration with the society, feelings of being cared for by loved ones, and being satisfied with one's social networks. Thus, hospitality is really robustly linked to human wellbeing and flourishing (Park & Peterson, 2006), and it is treasured by peoples of the world. This reality makes it a human virtue that is worth cultivating in the young as well as older members of the society.

### **Hospitality as a Character Strength**

The genesis of the term hospitality can be traced to ancient times with its roots in Proto-Indo-European hypothetical language (O'Gorman, 2007). The word hospitality is derived from a Greek word *ghos-ti*, which means stranger, guest, and host (American Heritage Dictionary, 2001). In the ancient times, hospitality was perceived as fundamentally organic and important part of the society revealing a lot about their cultural values and beliefs (O'Gorman, 2005). Additionally, hospitality was viewed as an honorable tradition that is central to human effort (O'Gorman, 2005). In ancient Greece, hospitality was a way of revering the gods, which was so essential to civilized life (O'Gorman, 2005).

In medieval times, hospitality was perceived as not only offering free accommodation to strangers and travelers, but also being compassionate to others in monasteries, guesthouses, and hospitals (Hockert, 2015). Later on, hospitality acquired new conceptualizations such as mutual duty to protect, receive, accommodate, and feed each other, as well as receiving others, especially the disadvantaged without seeking compensation (Hockert, 2015). According to Heal (1990), the duty to be hospitable to foreigners was a deeply held belief in early modern England. People used a series of private actions to express hospitality (Heal, 1984). Additionally, the offering of hospitality and the treatment accorded to travelers was an important value (Heal, 1990).

The Greek people assumed that true hospitality did not mind who the visitor was, or their apparent position in life. Generous hospitality spontaneously given to a stranger was the same as that accorded to a god (O'Gorman, 2007). The Greeks believed that human beings were rewarded with preferential treatment by the gods because of their honorable behavior (O'Gorman, 2005). Additionally, hospitality provides the motivation to pursue the virtue of hospitableness (Telfer, 1996). On another plane, violation of hospitality brought wraths of the gods (O'Gorman, 2005). The ancient Romans kept the law of hospitality and the custom of hospitality was common to all nations in Italy (Julian, 2012). Similar to the Greeks, violation of hospitality was considered sinful and a great crime in Rome (O'Gorman, 2007).

On the contrary, however, Gathogo (2003) found out in his study on 'Christ's Hospitality' that, in some European contexts, uninvited guests are often perceived as disturbance of one's program. Making unexpected visits is deemed as being impolite. In the same study, some respondents observed that having strangers in one's hospitality is not a well-developed concept particularly in modern central and Northern Europe (Gathogo, 2006). In German culture for instance, unexpected visits during meal time are viewed as being rude. Further, fences surround houses and children are not encouraged to go into other people's compounds (Gathogo, 2006). This is a similar situation in some places in the United States of America, where the law allows owners to shoot trespasser who steps on their ground (Fuerman, 2016; Gathogo, 2003; Gathogo, 2006; Keyes, 2002). According to Gathogo (2003), the German presence of fence that prevents the visitor from getting into the compound is a strong symbol in itself.

Similarly, Africans perceive hospitality as a basic element in human relations that persists till today, and essentially, it is among the fundamental values of a native African man (Ezenweke & Nwadiolor, 2013). Africans view hospitality as generosity voluntarily given without expecting anything in return (Derrida, 1998; Gathogo, 2006). It is the willingness to love, to give, to assist, to help, and to carry each other's burden without necessarily profit or reward as the motivating factors (Gathogo, 2008). Africans based hospitality on the fact that no one exists alone; rather, each and every one is part of the whole community (Gathogo, 2006; 2008; 2013). Further, hospitality portrayed people depending on each other in the community where there is communal readiness to assist each other (Mbiti, 2015).

Furthermore, Africans expressed hospitality by leaving whatever one is doing to welcome the visitor, make the guest feel at home, enjoy a friendly conversation, and serve food and drink (Healey & Sybertz, 1996). Africans express hospitality through

interdependence where the contribution of every member of the society is important and necessary (Mutugi, 2013). By so doing, hospitality manifests the African sense of communality (Mutugi, 2013). Additionally, traditional Africans extend both hands in welcome of the visitor as a symbol of hospitality (Healey & Sybertz, 1996). In the traditional African cultures, all people are welcomed and the feeling of togetherness among the people surpasses all forms of formal invitations (Ambe, 1993). Thus, even when guests come without an invitation, the door is always open. The householder shows kindness and welcomes them with open hands and arms (Healey & Sybertz, 1996).

In Kenya among the Agikuyu traditional society, the practice of hospitality is a duty and a customary rule which requires that visitors and travelers of all genders be fed and if necessary, be provided with somewhere to sleep (Kinoti, 2010). Hospitality has some great contribution to the wellbeing of the individuals and society (Cohn, Fredrickson, Brown, Mikels, & Conway, 2009; Kinoti, 2010; McMahan & Estes, 2011; Ruch, Proyer & Weber, 2009). Furthermore, Kinoti observes that hospitality was so common and warm-hearted among the Agikuyu that nobody was worried about food while on a journey, and indeed, neighbours never refused to lend (Kinoti, 2010). According to the Agikuyu community, the expression of hospitality was based on three aspects: spontaneous giving, offering a meal to a visitor, and speed. Spontaneous giving refers to giving away willingly what belongs to one. Giving is a gesture expected of anyone who receives visitors at home (Kinoti, 2010).

A hospitable person does not wait to be visited, sometimes householders persuade a passer-by to stop and have something to bite (Kinoti, 2010). For instance, it was a common gesture in Agikuyu culture for a person to send someone else in order to offer him hospitality. As Kinoti (2010) found out, when an elder slaughtered a bull, he sent for young men of the neighbourhood to come and stretch out the hide to dry. This gave the elder an opportunity to offer hospitality to the young men as prescribed by custom (Kinoti, 2010). The traditional Agikuyu were quick to serve their visitors. Indeed, quick service was the essence of hospitality, and the sense of urgency put into matter of being hospitable distinguished the generous person from the stingy person (Kinoti, 2010).

### **Young Adults, Character Strengths, and Hospitality**

The ultimate aim of parents, educators and societies is to raise virtuous children (Park & Peterson, 2005). Identification and cultivation of character strengths (virtues) in children and youth are among the chief interests of educators, philosophers, and theologians across different cultures and eras (Park & Peterson, 2005). According to Seligman (2002), positive psychology emphasizes building the good life by identifying and fostering individual strength of character. Good character is critical for lifelong optimal human development (Colby, James, & Hart, 1998). Additionally, good character is at the core of positive youth development, and it is what parents look for in their children, what siblings look for in their brothers and sisters, what friends look for in each other, and what teachers look for in their students (Park & Peterson, 2005). Accordingly, the practice of character strengths is linked to positive youth development including desirable outcomes such as school achievement, vocational aspirations, good interpersonal relations, and community involvement (Steen, et al., 2003). Similarly, the practice of character strengths such as perseverance, hope, and zest, work as a cushion against a variety of negative outcomes including psychological disorders (Park & Peterson, 2003; 2008).

A study carried out in the United States by Steen, Kachorek, and Peterson (2003) on Character Strengths among Youth depicts the importance young people have placed on the practice of character strengths. According to this study, certain strengths of character such as leadership, practical intelligence, wisdom, love of learning, social intelligence, spirituality, and capacity to love and to be loved were highlighted as of great value to young people (Steen, et al., 2003). Such character strengths and virtues contribute to the flourishing of individual young persons and the entire society (Park & Peterson, 2009; Ruch, Proyer & Weber 2009). Similarly, the practice of hospitality as a character strength is treasured because it contributes to the flourishing of all members of the society (Edwards, 2013; Hausler, Strecker, Huber, Brenner, Hoge, & Hofer, 2017; Kinoti, 2010; Ruch, Proyer & Weber 2009). Hospitality was one of those African moral and cultural values that parents integrated into their Christian way of life. Parents would then instil the spirit of hospitality in their children right from childhood (Gathogo, 2006; Moila 2002).

### **Empirical Literature Review**

This section of review focused on correlation between hospitality as a character strength and human flourishing. Good character is essential to psychological, social, and emotional wellbeing, and an important indicator of healthy, positive lifelong development and flourishing (Colby & Damon, 1992; Edwards, 2013; Hausler, Strecker, Huber, Berner, Hoge & Hofer, 2017; Negovan, 2010; Park & Peterson, 2008; Park & Peterson, 2009; Ruch, Proyer & Weber, 2009; Weissberg & Greenberg, 1997). In a study on character strengths and positive youth development, Park found that certain strengths of character for instance being hopeful, kind, and socially intelligent, having self-control and perspective, promotes flourishing and could also buffer against the negative effects emanating from stress and trauma, as well as preventing or mitigating disorders in their onset (Park, 2004).

According to Littman-Ovadia and Lavy (2012), the practice of character strengths has been linked with a host of psychological outcomes, such as emotional wellbeing exemplified by positive affect and life satisfaction. Further, character strengths are allied to psychological wellbeing manifested through self-acceptance, environmental mastery, a sense of purpose in life, as well as physical and mental health, (Hausler, Strecker, Huber, Brenner, Hoge, and Hofey, 2017; Leontopoulou & Triliva, 2012; Ryff & Keyes, 1995) Additionally, Hausler, Strecker, Huber, Brenner, Hoge, and Hofey (2017) highlighted that character strengths are a potential starting point for increasing individual wellbeing in general. As character strengths that are valued across cultures, hospitality is engrained in the African cultural and moral values (Moila, 2002). Africans value hospitality because it promoted the flourishing of individuals and the community (Kinoti 2010; McMahan & Estes, 2011). Moila (2002) argued that any disruption of the wellbeing of a community

demands a shared common meal by the members of the community for restoration to earlier state. Further, hospitality is a powerful tool that unites community, ancestors, and God (Moila, 2002). From the psychological perspectives, values contribute to individual's and community's wellbeing (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Character strengths are considered to be the basic building blocks of human goodness and human flourishing (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Niemiec, 2013).

Different scholars present varied conceptualizations of human flourishing construct. According to Huppert and So (2013), flourishing is a combination of positive affect and effective functioning. It also refers to wellbeing and the experience of life going well (Huppert & So, 2013). Flourishing epitomizes mental health, and it relates to high levels of mental well-being (Huppert, 2009; Keyes, 2002; Ryff & Singer, 1998). Keyes and Annas (2009) argued that, mental wellbeing does not suggest absence of mental illness, rather, it is a distinct feature of effective functioning and positive feelings. Consequently, Keyes (2002) claimed that flourishing is the product of mentally healthy individuals having high levels of emotional wellbeing, feeling happy and satisfied, and having a purpose in life. More to that, flourishing persons feel some degree of accepting all parts of themselves, have mastery of environment, have a sense of personal growth in the sense that they are growing, evolving, and changing, and they have a sense of autonomy and an internal locus of control (Dougherty & Dunn, 2008; Keyes, 2002; Losanda & Fredrickson, 2005). This corresponded to Ryff and Keyes' (1995) conceptualization of psychological wellbeing indicating that flourishing is synonymous to wellbeing.

Keyes (2002) considered people who are not flourishing to be languishing. For instance, Keyes (2002) carried out a study in the United States among adults aged between 25 to 74 years. The study compared and investigated prevalence and psychosocial functioning associated with the categories of mental health and major depression. The study revealed that languishing individuals manifested amount of chronic diseases such as major depression and activity limitation, whereas flourishers were in exceptionally better physical health and functioned well (Corey, 2002). Flourishers were high in positive emotions and positive functioning, whereas languishing individuals reported both low positive emotions and positive functioning (Johnson, Jones, Scholes, & Carras, 2013) such as feeling void, stuck in life, and lack of interest and engagement (Johnson, Jones, Scholes, & Carras, 2013; Keyes, 2005; 2013). Individuals who are neither flourishing nor languishing are considered to have moderate mental health (Keyes, 2005; 2013; Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

According to Johnson, Jones, Scholes, and Carras (2013), Keyes (2002; 2007), and Lamers (2012), flourishing involves the presence of mental health characterized by the presence of high levels of emotional wellbeing and positive functioning (Karas, Ciecich, & Keyes, 2014; Keyes, 2006). According to Huppert (2009), Huppert and So (2013), and Keyes (2002), flourishing refers to having high levels of both eudaimonic wellbeing and hedonic wellbeing. Hedonic wellbeing comprises emotional wellbeing which in turn consists of components that include; life-satisfaction, happiness, and the balance between positive and negative feelings (Diener, 1984), whereas eudaimonic wellbeing is made up of social wellbeing and psychological wellbeing.

Emotional wellbeing consists of a positive balance of pleasant to unpleasant feelings and mental assessment of being satisfied with life (Keyes, 2003; Lamers, Bohlmeijer, Westerhof, ten Klooster, & Keyes, 2011; Machado, & Bandeira, 2015). For instance, the pleasant feelings are operationalized as positive affect, happiness, and life satisfaction (Langeland, 2014). Positive emotions is exemplified by feelings such as cheerfulness, being in good spirits, happiness, peacefulness, being satisfied, calmness, and being full of life (Langeland, 2016). Life satisfaction is reflected by a sense of satisfaction with past or present life (Keyes, 2003). The feelings of happiness are reflected by being happy with one's past or present life (Keyes, 2003). According to Fredrickson (2004), positive emotions expand people's cognitive activities, reduce arousal of persistent negative emotions, activate psychological resilience, and fuels physical and psychological wellbeing. Consequently, this improves people's emotional wellbeing leading to human flourishing (Langeland, 2014). Similarly, the practice of hospitality contributes to individual's emotional wellbeing by evoking positive emotions such as happiness. For instance, in Lashley's study on hospitality and hospitableness, one of the respondents admitted feeling happy by seeing the smile on the faces of the guests (Lashley, 2015).

On another plane, social wellbeing focuses on aspects that define optimal functioning in life such as social integration, social coherence, social contribution, social acceptance, and social actualization. Social integration entails the assessment of the quality of an individual's relationship to community and society (Keyes, 1998). Further, it is the degree to which individuals feel they share something in common with others who make their social reality. Socially integrated persons feel that they fit to the society. Social contribution focuses on one's social value which includes the belief that one is an important member of society, and possesses something valuable to give to the society (Keyes, 1998). Social coherence refers to the view of the quality, organization, and operation of the social world, and a concern for knowing about the world (Keyes, 1998).

Socially coherent individuals endeavor to understand what is happening around them rather than being concerned with the nature of world they live in (Keyes, 1998; Lashley, 2008). Social actualization is the belief in the development of society and the sense that it's potential is realized through its institutions and citizens. Healthier individuals recognize society's potential and are hopeful about the condition and future of society. Finally, social acceptance entails the understanding of society through the character and qualities of other people. Persons who demonstrate social acceptance think that others are capable of kindness, trust others, and believe that people can be productive (Keyes, 1998; Lashley, 2008).

Conversely, the practice of hospitality contributes to the social wellbeing of individuals and society at large. For instance, according to Healey and Sybertz (1996), hospitality is a way of life that is closely bound with personal and communal relationships. This brings about the aspects of social integration; in which individuals feel they fit in the community, and social acceptance where individuals show kindness to others thus promoting interpersonal relationships. Hospitality is grounded on the fact that no one exists alone; rather, each and every one is part of the whole community (Gathogo, 2008). This manifests social contribution, in which through hospitality, individuals contributes to the welfare of the whole community.

The third dimension of human flourishing is psychological wellbeing that focuses on human development and existential challenges. Ryff (1989) identified six sub-dimensions that describe psychological wellbeing. The sub-dimensions include personal growth, autonomy, positive relations with others, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and self-acceptance, (Dougherty & Dunn, 2008; Garcia, Nima, & Kjell, 2014; Guo, Tomson, Guo, Li, Keller, & Soderqvist, 2015; Losanda & Fredrickson, 2005; Ryff, 1989, Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Machado & Bandeira, 2015; Seymour, 2015; Vescovelli, Albiéri, & Ruini, 2014).

The first sub-dimension of psychological wellbeing is personal growth that is a fundamental element that contributes to optimal psychological functioning (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 1996). Effective psychological functioning requires a continuous development and growth of one's self in order to expand as a person (Negovan, 2010; Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 1996). Personal growth is achieved through personal actualization and awareness of one's abilities (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 1996).

Focusing on the sub-dimension of autonomy, literature emphasizes that, human beings possess qualities such as self-rule, independence, and the regulation of behavior (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 1996; Seymour, 2015). Self-actualizers are described as showing independent functioning and resistance to the influence of culture (Ryff & Singer, 1996). Thus, an individual capable of functioning effectively is described as having an internal locus of evaluation, whereby one does not depend on others for approval, but evaluates oneself by personal ideals (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 1996; Stegeman, 2014).

The sub-dimension of positive relations with others is concerned with interpersonal relationship. This refers to a close association between two or more people that may range in duration from being to enduring (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 1996; Seymour, 2015). Many theories on human relations emphasize the importance of sincere and trusting interpersonal relationships (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 1996). A person's ability to love for example is perceived as a significant component of mental health (Ryff, 1989). Moreover, a better understanding of relationships and values, and possessing the skills to develop them, enhances good relations at places of work, in family, and in the society, thus building a world that is safe and more civilized (Roffey, 2012). Self-actualizers are empathic and affectionate to all human beings, are capable of making deeper friendships, and can identify themselves with others (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 1996). Thus, a positive relationship with others is emphasized in the conceptions of psychological wellbeing (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 1996).

Another sub-dimension of psychological wellbeing is environmental mastery that entails the ability of a person to choose or create environments suitable to his or her mental conditions (Garcia, Nima, & Kjell, 2014; Ryff & Singer, 1996; Seymour, 2015). Additionally, maturity manifests itself when a person is able to participate in a significant sphere outside of self (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 1996). Environmental mastery demands one's ability to advance in the world and change it in creativity through physical or mental activities (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 1996). Active participation in and mastery of the environment are elements of an integrated framework of positive psychological wellbeing (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 2008; Seymour, 2015).

Concerning the sub-dimension of purpose in life, Frankl (1946/2004) observes that, searching for meaning in life is the main motivation of human beings, and this serves as a central component of people's psychological and subjective wellbeing (Damasio, Pimenteira de Mello, & Pereira de Silva, 2013; Klein, 2017; Perugini, Iglezia, Solano, & Keyes, 2017). Further, maturity entails a clear understanding of the purpose in life, a sense of directedness, and intentionality (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 1996). Additionally, individuals are engaged in changing their purposes or goals of life, to become more productive and emotionally integrated in later life (Ryff & Singer, 1996). Consequently, one who functions positively has goals, intentions, and a sense of direction, all of which contribute to the feeling that life is meaningful (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 1996).

Lastly, the sub-dimension of self-acceptance is a fundamental component of mental health. It is a characteristic of optimal functioning, maturity, and self-actualization (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 1996). According to Carson and Langer (2014), absence of the ability to unconditional self-acceptance can lead to a variety of emotional problems. Bernard (2013) observes that, self-acceptance can be a catalyst for alleviation of emotional misery, as well as an energizer supporting growth towards happiness and fulfilment. Further, self-acceptance involves a realistic, personal awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses (Bernard, 2013). Moreover, Shepard (1979) notes that self-acceptance is achievable when one tolerates his or her imperfections, rather than being critical to self, or trying to solve own defects. Accordingly, it is important to accept one's self and past life (Bronfman, Cisternas, Lopez-Vazquez, Maza, & Oyanedel, 2015; Niemiec, 2013; Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 2008; Schwaz & Boehnke, 2004). Consequently, having positive attitudes towards self and the practice of character strengths are vital aspects of positive psychological wellbeing (Ryan, Huta, & Deci, 2006; Ryff, 1989; Seymour, 2015).

Equally, the practice of hospitality contributes to the psychological wellbeing of the society, thus promoting human flourishing. For instance, a study by Kinoti on Gikuyu traditional moral values among old, middle and young age group Gikuyu members revealed that the practice of hospitality promoted goodwill between people (Kinoti, 2010). People took care of each through provision of food and this averted any possible curse (Kinoti, 2010). This in turn promoted positive relations in the community. The same study revealed that a hospitable person does not only cater for his own future welfare but also for that of his children and other members of the community (Kinoti, 2010). Thus, through hospitality, individuals are able to participate in a significant sphere outside of self (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 1996), own family and community. This in turn promotes the aspect of environmental mastery through creatively changing the lives of visitors who come to their homes. According to Kinoti (2010), the practice of hospitality was valued mainly because it promoted the wellbeing of the community and the welfare of the individuals in the community.

## Literature Gap

Values are categorized as character strengths, and they contribute to human flourishing (Lopez & Synder, 2007; Keyes, Fredrickson, & Park, 2012; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Selvam, 2010). However, there has been a marked shift in the understanding and expression of hospitality among societies today. Hospitality is a perennial value in all cultures, but it is being altered as a result of modernization exhibited through trends like urbanization (Healey & Sybertz, 1996; Meler & Lemmer, 2015). Due to the work and demands of urban life, people have less time to welcome others to their homes and offer hospitality (Healey & Sybertz, 1996). This realization was the main reason for this study. However, psychological literature on hospitality as a character and its contribution to human flourishing are limited. Instead, too much of the emphasis is on hospitality as an industry. More to that, there are no known psychological studies on correlation between hospitality and human flourishing in Kenya from the literature reviewed (Ryff, 1989; Keyes, 1998; Seymour, 2015).

### III RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Quantitative research design was employed. The sample for the study comprised of 308 young African adults purposely selected from four parishes in Nairobi and Nakuru Counties, Kenya. The parishes were purposively sampled because of the diverse representation of population. Convenience sampling was employed to select two parishes from Nairobi County and two parishes from Nakuru County because of the presence of established young adults' groups in the church.

Adult Mental Health Continuum Scale- short form (MCH-SF) and Hospitality Scale were employed as instruments for data collection. MCH-SF comprehensively measures the degree of positive mental health across the dimensions of emotional, social, and psychological wellbeing (Solano, 2014). The Mental Health Continuum comprise of three levels of positive mental health: Flourishing, moderate, and languishing mental health (Guo et al, 2015; Keyes, 2005; 2013). The MHC-SF consists of 14 items that were chosen as sample items representing the construct definition for each aspect of wellbeing. Three items were chosen (interested in life, happy, and satisfied) to represent emotional wellbeing, six items (one item from each of the 6 dimensions) were chosen to represent psychological wellbeing, and five items (one item from each of the 5 dimensions) were chosen to represent social wellbeing (Guo, et al., 2013; Keyes, 2002; 2009; Keyes, 2017; Petrillo, Capone, Caso, & Keyes, 2015).

The respondents are asked to rate the frequency of every feeling on a 6-point Likert Scale (0=never, 1=once or twice a month, 2=about once a week, 3= two or three times a week, 4=almost every day, 5=every day). To be diagnosed with flourishing mental health, individuals must experience 'everyday' or 'almost every day' at least one of the three signs of emotional wellbeing and at least six of the eleven signs of psychological and social wellbeing during the past month. Individuals who exhibit low levels ('never' or 'once' or 'twice') during the past month on at least one measure of emotional wellbeing, and low levels on at least six measures of psychological and social wellbeing are diagnosed with languishing mental health. Moderately mentally healthy are neither languishing nor flourishing (Guo, et al., 2015; Keyes, 1998; Keyes, 2005; 2007; 2009; Ryff, 1989; Petrillo, Capone, Caso, & Keyes, 2015).

MHC-SF is scored by summing up the items yielding a total score ranging from 0 to 70. Subscale scores range from 0 to 15 for the emotional wellbeing, from 0 to 25 for social wellbeing, and from 0 to 30 for psychological wellbeing (Keyes, 2009). Flourishing mental health is defined by reporting greater or equal to one of the three emotional wellbeing signs, and six of the eleven social and psychological subscale combined experienced "everyday" or "5 – 6 times a week". Higher scores indicate greater levels of positive wellbeing (Keyes, 2009).

A research carried out by Perugini, Iglesia, Solano and Keyes (2017) in an Argentinean context indicate that MHC-SF has shown excellent internal consistency (>.80) and discriminant validity in adolescents of ages 12-18 and adults in the United States, in the Netherlands, and in South Africa (Keyes, 2002; 2005, 2006; 2007; Keyes, Biswas-Diener, & King, 2008; Lamers, Westerhof, Bohlmeijer, ten Klooster, & Keyes, 2011 Westerhof & Keyes, 2009). The total MHC-SF scale reported an internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of .89 (Perugini, Iglesia, Solano & Keyes, 2017).

The Hospitality Scale has 9-items scored in a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 means "Very much unlike me." and 5 means "Very much like me." Typical items of the scale read: "I make sure that my guests have better food than what I would normally have" or "I enjoy spending ample time with my guests". These items were identified from literature review. In an unpublished data-set, the correlation between the items was significant indicating that the items were measuring related dimensions that add together to form a single construct. Factor Analysis using Principal Component Analysis with Varimax Rotation suggested the emergence of a two-factor model : Dispositional Hospitality (with 6 items) that explained 30.33% of the total variations (Eigenvalue = 2.73) and Logistical Hospitality (with 3 items) explaining 15.03% of the variance (Eigenvalue = 1.353). Further, the results reported internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of .919 for dispositional hospitality, and internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of .785 for logistical hospitality. The overall Hospitality Scale reported an internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of .657. Hence, the scale is considered reliable to be used among Kenyan population.

Data analysis employed Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Pearson's Package Moment Correlation Tool (Pearson's r) was used to give insights on the association between hospitality and human flourishing.

#### Ethical Considerations

The researcher endeavored to safeguard the dignity of participants by appreciating their right to choose to participate or withdraw from the study, to remain anonymous, and to be assured of privacy and confidentiality. In order to enhance confidentiality and privacy, the researcher used initials and numbers to identify participants. The researcher took all reasonable measures to protect



participants from any psychological harm. All data collected was handled, preserved and stored with ultimate confidentiality before and after the research.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

##### Research Question

Was there a correlation between hospitality and human flourishing among young African adults in Nairobi and Nakuru counties?

Pearson’s correlation was used and results summarized in Table 4.1. The study found a significant positive correlation between the overall hospitality score and human flourishing score ( $r=.417, p<.01$ ). The study also found out that hospitality had significant correlation with the three dimensions of human flourishing. For instance, the overall hospitality had significant correlation with emotional wellbeing ( $r=.417, p<.01$ ), social wellbeing ( $r=.278, p<.01$ ) and psychological wellbeing ( $r=.341, p<.01$ ). Lastly, while dispositional hospitality is more aligned to emotional wellbeing ( $r=.422, p<.01$ ), logistical hospitality is significantly correlated to psychological wellbeing ( $r=.284, p<.01$ ).

Table 4.1: Pearson’s Correlation Matrix showing the Correlation between Hospitality and Human Flourishing variables

	Over. Hosp.	Hum. Flor.	EWB	SWB	PWB	Dis. Hosp.	Log. Hosp.
Overall hospitality	1						
Human Flourishing	.417**	1					
Emotional Well Being	.417**	.750**	1				
Social Well Being	.278**	.809**	.531**	1			
Psychological Well Being	.341**	.838**	.447**	.439**	1		
Dispositional Hospitality	.919**	.428**	.422**	.307**	.334**	1	
Logistical Hospitality	.785**	.258**	.266**	.137*	.284**	.476**	1

**Note<sup>4</sup>:** Sample size = 283, \*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), \*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The study further revealed a significant positive correlation between hospitality and dimensions of human flourishing, that includes Psychological wellbeing that encompasses (personal growth, autonomy, positive relations with others, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and self-acceptance); Social wellbeing that comprises (social integration, social coherence, social contribution, social acceptance, and social actualization); Emotional wellbeing which consists of (life-satisfaction, happiness, and the balance between positive and negative feelings. ) for instance, the study revealed that overall hospitality had significant and positive correlation with self-acceptance ( $r=.316, p<.01$ ) positive relations with others ( $r=.291, p<.01$ ) and environmental mastery ( $r=.285, p<.01$ ) as summarized in Table 4.6. The results of Table 4.2 further displayed that dispositional hospitality had significant positive correlation with positive relations with others ( $r=.316, p<.01$ ), environmental mastery ( $r=.300, p<.01$ ) and social integration ( $r=.295, p<.01$ ) whereas logistical hospitality had significant positive correlation with self-acceptance ( $r=.248, p<.01$ ) and social contribution ( $r=.229, p<.01$ ).

Table 4.2: Pearson’s Correlation Matrix showing the Correlation between Hospitality and Sub-scales of Social and Psychological wellbeing

	Over. Hosp.	Dis. Hosp.	Log. Hosp.	Soc. Contr.	Soc. Inter.	Soc. Act.	Soc. Acc.	Soc. Coher.
Overall hospitality	1							
Dispositional Hospitality	.919**	1						
Logistical Hospitality	.785**	.476**	1					
Social Contribution	.231**	.182**	.229**	1				
Social Integration	.284**	.295**	.171**	.382**	1			
Social Actualization	.176**	.201**	0.076	.277**	.321**	1		
Social Acceptance	.146*	.203**	0.005	.199**	.331**	.428**	1	
Social Coherence	.120*	.171**	0	.214**	.208**	.452**	.476**	1
Self-Acceptance	.316**	.290**	.248**	.387**	.370**	.179**	.247**	.145*
Environmental Mastery	.285**	.300**	.164**	.266**	.312**	.245**	.199**	.208**
Positive Relations with others	.291**	.316**	.151*	.252**	.240**	.204**	.232**	.196**
Personal Growth	.238**	.227**	.173**	.199**	.244**	.256**	.140*	.184**
Autonomy	.172**	.148*	.150*	.234**	.274**	.200**	0.086	.157**
Purpose in life	.194**	.180**	.150*	.199**	.249**	.135*	.174**	.182**

**Note<sup>5</sup>:** Sample size = 283, \*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), \*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

## V. DISCUSSION

Generally, there is a significant positive correlation between hospitality as a character strength and human flourishing ( $r = .417$ ,  $p < .01$ ). These findings are in agreement with Colby and Damon (1992) and Negovan (2010) who opined that good character is essential to emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing, and an important indicator of healthy, positive lifelong development and flourishing. Park and Peterson (2006) observed that certain strengths of character for instance being hopeful, kind, and socially intelligent, having self-control and perspective, promotes flourishing and can also buffer against the negative effects emanating from stress and trauma, as well as preventing or mitigating disorders in their onset. Additionally, Hausler et al. (2017) stated that character strengths are a potential starting point for increasing individual wellbeing in general.

The results of this study revealed a significant positive correlation between hospitality and human flourishing among young African adults in Nairobi and Nakuru counties.

### Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed a significant positive link between hospitality and human flourishing in the young African adults from Nairobi and Nakuru counties. This implies that emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing are important indicators of healthy, positive lifelong development and flourishing which in turn improves hospitability of the young African adults.

### Recommendations

#### Policy Recommendations

This study proposes two recommendations. First, the study recommends that young adults be guided and trained in character strengths such as hospitality so that African cultural values are preserved and their flourishing is enhanced. This will be accomplished through giving guidance, seminars and workshops on character strengths. Second, given that a significant positive relationship was established between hospitality and human flourishing, the present study recommends training children from an early age the value of hospitality and generosity.

This will be achieved by encouraging children to practice the value of sharing what they have with others at home, school, and in the society. Further, it will be attained when parents and significant others practice genuine hospitality thus becoming role models that can be emulated by children. More to that, leaders holding different positions in the society can help instill the value of hospitality by executing their duties guided by character strengths such as respect, honesty, integrity, love, kindness...etc. This will in turn allow young people and children learn to be hospitable without expecting anything in return. Subsequently, this will help build strong positive relationships with others in the society.

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