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# Exposure to news on current conflicts in the post-migration context

*The experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands dealing with  
post-traumatic stress disorder*

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## Preface

In front of you lies the thesis 'Exposure to news on current conflicts in the post-migration context: the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder'. I worked on this master's thesis from February until August 2024 to graduate with an MA in Religion, Conflict & Globalization at the University of Groningen.

For a long time, I have been interested in the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers and the various issues that they deal with. With this motivation, I started this research. It has been fascinating to examine and write about the influence of the various contexts refugees and asylum seekers exist in and how they navigate factors such as exposure to news. With a little sweat and tears, I am proud of the finished product.

However, without the help of others, this would not have been possible. Therefore, I first want to thank my supervisor Anja Visser, for the moments of discussion, the pleasant guidance and support, and the helpful feedback. I want to thank Simon Groen for the advice and support, including the various discussions that have helped me in my thought processes and given structure to this work. Furthermore, I want to thank the participants whose willingness to share their experiences made this research possible. My appreciation also goes to the centre for transcultural psychiatry where I have conducted this research, and to the practitioners who have shared ideas and thought along to include suitable patients.

Lastly, I want to thank my partner, Ruben, and my family and friends for their support, patience, encouragement, and belief in me during this process and my MA program.

I wish you reading pleasure and hope this thesis brings you new insights into the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands.

Ans Kooymans

Groningen, August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024

## **Abstract**

While various studies have researched the effects of ‘televised trauma’, exposure to news on current conflicts has not yet been examined among refugees and asylum seekers dealing with PTSD. Six refugees and asylum seekers have participated in this qualitative research that aims to shed light on exposure to news on current conflicts among refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and its relation to post-migration stress. Among participants, exposure to news on current conflicts can worsen PTSD symptoms, lead to negative emotions, and add to post-migration stress. Due to these effects, participants employ different coping strategies such as avoidance. However, individual motivations drive participants to continue engaging with the news, as it can be a resource for staying informed, social integration, or maintaining hope. Future research should examine the role of social well-being in the perception of media and examine the media as a resource to improve social well-being.

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## Introduction

*Every war will end someday. But even when the weapons are laid down, the violence rages on in memory. [...] Old fear can suddenly flare up. At the sudden sound of a siren. When there is swearing or aggression in our streets. When images of horrific war violence enter our living rooms, our hearts. (Het Parool, 2024)*

These are the words of the mayor of Amsterdam, Femke Halsema, on the fourth of May 2024. On this day, victims of war are commemorated in the Netherlands to keep the memory of the Second World War alive. Still, people from different places are fleeing conflict and war violence. In 2015 and 2016, there was a peak in asylum applications in the European Union with around 1,2 million applications. In 2022, there were over 900 thousand applications in the European Union (European Council & Council of the European Union, 2024). Refugees and asylum seekers seek shelter in the European Union, also in the Netherlands, taking with them memories of war and violence.

These memories often consist of traumatic experiences. As a result, many refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands deal with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Pharos, 2018). PTSD arises when someone is exposed to trauma through direct personal exposure, when witnessing the trauma of others, or through indirect exposure to trauma, for example through the experience of a family member. PTSD is characterized, for example, by recurrent memories of traumatic events, flashbacks, or distressing dreams (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). In western countries<sup>1</sup>, the prevalence of PTSD among refugees is significantly higher than in the general population. Around one in ten adult refugees in western countries deal with PTSD (Fazel et al., 2005). In the Netherlands, the prevalence of PTSD among the general

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<sup>1</sup> The study by Fazel et al. (2005) included participants residing in seven high-income western countries: Australia, Canada, Italy, New Zealand, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

population is 7.4 per cent while refugees and asylum seekers from Iran, Afghanistan, and Somalia have a prevalence of PTSD of 20 per cent (Lamkaddem et al., 2014).

After arriving in western countries, refugees and asylum seekers deal with acculturation processes and various societal domains, such as the asylum procedure, social isolation, and finding housing (Alexander et al., 2021; Eisen et al., 2021; Madianos, 2010; Silove et al., 1997). In this post-migration phase, they can experience various stress factors which can cause the persistence of the risk of mental health problems (Li et al., 2016). Post-migration stress factors can be divided into three categories: socio-economic, social and interpersonal, and the asylum process and immigration policy. For example, Iraqi refugees in the Netherlands worry about news about their home country or experience stress due to lack of work (Groen et al., 2019; Laban et al., 2005). Thus, refugees and asylum seekers often deal with pre-migration, migration, and post-migration stress factors.

In this day and age, the conflict situations refugees and asylum seekers have left behind, are often not unfamiliar to the general population. Images of war are visible on television or social media. For example, images of the conflict between Palestine and Israel or the conflict between Ukraine and Russia are broadcast thoroughly. However, this ‘televised trauma’ can have negative effects on those exposed to these images. Research shows how television images of the attacks in the United States on 9/11 and the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995 can be associated with posttraumatic stress symptoms (Ahern et al., 2002; Putnam, 2002; Pfefferbaum et al., 2001). Bodas et al. (2015), researched the effects of televised trauma on the emotional well-being of the Jewish Israeli audience during a conflict in Gaza in 2015. Based on the questionnaire they conducted, viewers reported anxiety symptoms that correlated to finding the news stressful but also fearing that information would be missed by not watching the news.

While literature shows that images of traumatic events can negatively affect viewers of these images, the influence of exposure to news on current conflicts has not yet been researched in a

post-migration context among refugees and asylum seekers dealing with PTSD. However, clinicians in transcultural psychiatry experience that news on conflict and war impacts this vulnerable group (S. Groen, personal communication, 2024). It is thus unclear what the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers dealing with PTSD are when exposed to news on current conflicts. Besides, it is unclear how this exposure to news on current conflicts might relate or interact with post-migration stress in aspects such as worries about family or being sent to the country of origin.

In an attempt to fill this gap, this thesis examines the effect of exposure to news on current conflicts on refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands dealing with PTSD and how this is related to post-migration stress. With this, this thesis aims to contribute to the academic discussion on post-migration stress in relation to exposure to news on conflicts. Furthermore, this thesis aims to contribute to the clinical practice, specifically in transcultural psychiatry, whose patients include refugees and asylum seekers who have been diagnosed with PTSD. How current conflicts and the images of these conflicts might impact patients in the transcultural psychiatry could give practitioners valuable insights.

To reach these objectives, this thesis will provide an answer to the research question: “*In what way does exposure to news on current conflicts relate to post-migration stress for refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands dealing with PTSD?*”. Three sub-questions have been formulated to provide insight into the post-migration experience of refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands, as well as the impact of news exposure on their emotional and social well-being: “In what way are refugees and asylum seekers dealing with PTSD exposed to news on current conflicts?”, “How do refugees and asylum seekers dealing with PTSD experience exposure to news on current conflicts in relation to their emotional well-being?”, “How do refugees and asylum seekers dealing with PTSD experience exposure to news on current conflicts in relation to their social well-being?”.

The experiences of refugees and asylum seekers dealing with PTSD have been assessed by conducting qualitative research. This entails that semi-structured in-depth interviews have been conducted with six adult refugees and asylum seekers who are under treatment at a centre for transcultural psychiatry in the Netherlands. At this centre, around 500 people with mental disorders and a different cultural background are treated. A large group of these patients are refugees or asylum seekers with common mental disorders such as anxiety, depression, and PTSD. This research was conducted in the period February 2024 until July 2024 by an MA student in Religion, Conflict and Globalization at the University of Groningen.

In the following chapter, an overview of already existing literature will be described by which relevant concepts and theories will provide a framework for this research. To understand post-migration stress, the conservation of resources theory by Hobfoll (1989) will serve as a basis to contextualise the experiences of the participants. Following this second chapter, the methodology provides a description of the research design, the participant recruitment process, the data collection process, and the data analysis process. In the fourth chapter, the results will be described based on the content analysis of the interviews that have been conducted. In this chapter, the ways of exposure to news on current conflicts and the effects this has on the emotional well-being of participants will be described. Following this, the coping strategies that participants employ will be outlined, including ways of avoidance and the social well-being of participants. Then, the considerations and motivations of participants will be highlighted and will elaborate on how participants navigate exposure to news on current conflicts. Lastly, the final chapter will provide an answer to the research question and discuss the interpretation of the data, the implications of the data, the limitations of the research, and recommendations based on the results.

## Theoretical Foundations & Literature Insights

Before examining the effect of exposure to news on current conflicts on refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands dealing with PTSD and its relation to post-migration stress, a few questions arise. How can we approach this topic and the different concepts involved? Furthermore, how have these issues been addressed in existing literature? This chapter will provide an overview of existing and relevant literature to embed this thesis in current academic discussions and to highlight possible gaps in the literature. Concepts will be detailed such as acculturation, post-migration stress, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), well-being, and media-induced secondary trauma or televised trauma are understood in the context of this research. The conservation of resources theory by Hobfoll (1989) and the well-being theories of Diener and Ryan (2009) and Keyes (1998) will provide a further understanding of stress, behaviour and well-being, serving as the lens through which the research will be conducted.

The research population of this thesis includes adult refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands dealing with PTSD. Migrating from various countries, refugees and asylum seekers seek shelter in the European Union. With a peak of asylum applications in the European Union in 2015 and 2016 (European Council & Council of the European Union, 2024), phrases such as ‘the refugee problem’ are not unfamiliar (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, 2024). The effects of refugee flows are central in public debates in Europe, as well as in the Netherlands.

In the Netherlands, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (IND) determines whether someone is referred to as a refugee. The IND assess the asylum application and grants asylum if someone meets the definition of ‘refugee’ (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, 2023). A person is a refugee when they were “forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group” (UNHCR, n.d.).

Before and during the asylum procedure, this individual is referred to as an asylum seeker. This thesis will refer to refugees and asylum seekers based on these definitions.

Often, refugees and asylum seekers have experienced or witnessed traumatic events. Before arrival in the host country, refugees and asylum seekers have been exposed to ‘pre-migration circumstances’. Pre-migration circumstances could include a low socio-economic status or traumatic experience. Many immigrants have been exposed to trauma before arriving in their host country (Li & Anderson, 2016). Due to these experiences, refugees and asylum seekers might deal with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD is described as a psychiatric disorder which can be experienced after a traumatic event (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5), provides multiple diagnostic criteria for PTSD (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) by which “exposure to trauma is the foundation for the rest of the criteria that comprise the diagnosis of PTSD” (Pai et al., 2017, p. 3).

The DSM-5 defines three types of exposure: direct personal exposure, witnessing of trauma to others, and indirect exposure through trauma experience of a family member or other close associate. Also, exposure to trauma by “experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event(s)” is included (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 271-272). For example, this may entail working in an environment where a traumatic event has occurred which leads to repeated or extreme exposure. Compared to the DSM-IV/-TR, the DSM-5 has specified that exposure to trauma through media or television is not included in these types of exposure. Furthermore, the DSM-5 describes how the personal response to exposure to trauma should be separated “from the definition of trauma exposure for conceptual clarity” (Pai et al., 2017, p. 3). In this thesis, the definition and criteria of the DSM-5 will be used to address PTSD as the DSM-5 is the leading classification system for mental disorders in the Netherlands (Nederlandse Vereniging voor Psychiatrie, 2014).

Individuals who deal with PTSD experience different symptoms. PTSD can be diagnosed when one or more symptoms as described in the DSM-5 occur after the traumatic event. PTSD is characterised, among others, by recurrent memories of traumatic events, flashbacks, or distressing dreams. Individuals with PTSD might have dissociative reactions and relive the traumatic experience in these dreams or flashbacks. Besides, an individual dealing with PTSD may persistently avoid “stimuli associated with the traumatic event” (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 271 - 272). Furthermore, associated with these traumatic events, individuals with PTSD can experience “negative alterations in cognitions and mood” (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 271 - 272) such as negative beliefs or a negative emotional state. Besides these symptoms, there could be changes in arousal and reactivity, for example, concentration or sleeping issues. When someone is experiencing one or more of these described symptoms for longer than a month and this disturbs their day-to-day functioning, this person meets the criteria for the diagnosis of PTSD according to the DSM-5.

In western countries<sup>2</sup>, the prevalence of PTSD among refugees is significantly higher than in the general population. Around one in ten adult refugees in western countries deal with PTSD (Fazel et al., 2005). In the Netherlands, the prevalence of PTSD among the general population is 7.4 per cent. At the same time, refugees and asylum seekers from Iran, Afghanistan, and Somalia have a prevalence of PTSD of 20 per cent (Lamkaddem et al., 2014). PTSD symptoms among resettled refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands can persist for several years after the experience of a traumatic event. Furthermore, symptoms can turn up later and thus have a “delayed onset” (Lamkaddem et al., 2014, p. 5).

Refugees and asylum seekers residing in Germany in a temporary accommodation with PTSD, have reported experiencing concentration issues, intrusive thoughts, stress, and difficulties in sleeping. Due to traumatic experiences, refugees and asylum seekers reported

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<sup>2</sup> The study by Fazel et al. (2005) included participants residing in seven high-income western countries: Australia, Canada, Italy, New Zealand, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

feeling suspicious of their environment and feelings of mistrust. To cope with these symptoms, distraction is sought in, for example, learning the language of the host country or working (Rzepka et al., 2022). Thus, due to experiencing or witnessing traumatic events, refugees and asylum seekers have a higher chance of dealing with PTSD.

To understand the context of the research population, both the pre-migration circumstances and post-migration circumstances must be included in this chapter. Besides pre-migration trauma, this population also deals with ‘post-migration stress factors’. After arrival in the Netherlands, refugees and asylum seekers deal with various societal domains. In this phase, described as the post-resettlement phase or post-migration phase, refugees and asylum seekers have to, for example, find housing or work, and apply for asylum (Eisen et al., 2021). During this phase, these several factors can cause experiencing stress. Moreover, in the post-resettlement phase, the risk of mental health problems for refugees and asylum seekers can persist (Li et al., 2016).

Several studies have researched different post-migration stress factors. Results from the study by Silove et al. (1997) show that asylum procedures may contribute to stress and psychiatric symptoms for asylum seekers dealing with pre-migration trauma. Silove et al. (1997) have listed several ‘post-migration living problems’ for asylum seekers:

Fear of being sent home, being unable to return home in an emergency, not being able to find work, delays in processing refugee applications, no permission to work, worries about family back home, poor access to dental care, worried about not getting treatment for health problems, little government help with welfare and separation from family. (Silove et al., 1997, p. 353)

Post-migration stressors such as lack of economic opportunity, lack of access to resources, social isolation, and family concerns, are included in the study by Alexander et al. (2021) based on the refugee post-migration stress scale (RPMS) developed by Malm et al. (2020). The RPMS

can assess post-migration stress as a multi-dimensional concept. The RPMS covers seven domains: “perceived discrimination, lack of host country-specific competencies, material and economic strain, loss of home country, family and home country concerns, social strains, and family conflicts” (Malm et al., 2020, p. 5). Refugees and asylum seekers residing in Germany have described how the uncertainty of the asylum procedure is deemed stressful. Furthermore, they report worries about relatives or friends (Rzepka et al., 2022).

Different studies have examined post-migration stress among refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands. Laban et al. (2005) used the post-migration living problems questionnaire adapted from Silove et al. (1997) to measure which post-migration stress factors were experienced by Iraqi asylum seekers in the Netherlands. Results from the study by Silove et al. (1997) show that lack of work, family issues, and asylum procedure stress are post-migration living problems that have the strongest association with psychopathology. Furthermore, Afghan and Iraqi refugees in the Netherlands experienced post-migration stress due to “feeling socially detached, worries about family, or feeling guilty toward the family” (Groen et al., 2019, p. 168). For Iraqi participants, post-migration stress factors included worrying and news about the home country. Additionally, the study by Groen et al. (2019) shows significant associations between post-migration stress, anxiety symptoms and depression disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms. Based on these studies, three overarching categories of post-migration stress factors can be described: socio-economic, social and interpersonal, and the asylum process and immigration policy.

Thus far, the context of refugees and asylum seekers has been outlined based on the PTSD symptoms and post-migration stress factors that they deal with. To give a clear overview of the context and experiences of the research population, the concept of ‘acculturation’ is important to elaborate on. After arriving in the Netherlands, refugees and asylum seekers undergo the process of acculturation. The term ‘acculturation’ was introduced by Redfield, Linton and

Herskovitch in 1936 and, since then, has been studied from various perspectives. Berry and Sam (1997) describe acculturation as the process by which migrants maintain their own culture while developing relationships with the new culture (as cited in Tanenbaum et al., 2013). Furthermore, acculturation can be understood as the process of individuals coming into “continuous” contact with different cultures (Madianos, 2010, p. 103). Through this continuous contact, changes occur in the original cultures of individuals by which they experience changes in “cognitive styles and behavioural patterns” (Madianos, 2010, p. 103) as well. The changes that come from this contact between individuals also fall under acculturation (Sam & Berry, 2006).

Berry (1997) proposes four acculturation strategies to provide a framework for how acculturation can take place. In this framework, ‘integration’, ‘separation’, ‘assimilation’, and ‘marginalization’ are the acculturation strategies that can exist between groups. Integration can be interpreted as the most favourable strategy by which the non-dominant group wants to participate in the social network of other cultural groups while also maintaining their own culture. The non-dominant group ‘assimilates’ when they do not maintain their own culture but do have daily interaction with other cultures. Furthermore, separation takes place when someone does maintain their own culture but avoids interactions within the social network of the other cultural group. Lastly, marginalization is defined as the strategy “when there is little possibility or interest in cultural maintenance [...] and little interest in having relations with others” (Berry, 1997, p. 9). This acculturation process is influenced by globalization, wherein processes of “interconnection and hybridization” play a role (Hermans and Kempen, 1998, p. 1113).

Acculturation can bring with it different challenges, such as “the risk of a mental disorder or unhealthy behaviour” (Madianos, 2010, p. 103). Immigrants can experience frustration, aggression, or identity crises when their efforts to integrate into the host society fail. The

negative effects of acculturation can be described as ‘acculturation stress’ and some studies conclude that acculturation can be linked to the mental health status of immigrants (Madianos, 2010). In Germany, refugees and asylum seekers have experienced cultural differences which caused difficulties in contact with others. Besides, they “did not feel welcomed” (Rzepka et al., 2022, p. 7). In the Netherlands, Syrian refugees also report experiencing cultural differences between the Dutch and Syrian cultures. Specifically, Syrian refugees may experience a religious boundary in social relationships, according to Şafak-AyvazoĞlu et al. (2021). In addition, “participation in Dutch culture is associated with a decreased risk of depressive, anxiety and co-morbidity of both disorders” (Ünlü Ince et al., 2014, p. 10). Hence, acculturation can be experienced in different ways but has a clear impact on the mental health of refugees.

Thus, refugees and asylum seekers, the research population of this thesis, deal with various pre-migration and post-migration stressors which have been described to understand their context and experiences. Traumatic experiences can cause PTSD symptoms such as flashbacks, sleeping issues, or a negative emotional state. Furthermore, studies show that refugees and asylum seekers may experience post-migration stress due to, for example, the asylum procedure, worries about family, or lack of work. Besides post-migration stress factors, refugees and asylum seekers undergo the process of acculturation in which they can employ various strategies but can also experience different challenges due to cultural differences. These various factors impact the well-being of refugees and asylum seekers.

The different factors that refugees deal with have been described to help understand the context that they live in. In addition, various studies have examined how images of conflict situations affect viewers of these images. At present, many are exposed to different images and updates on a global level. In a globalising world, the conflict situations from which refugees and asylum seekers flee can reach us in various ways. On television and social media, images and updates of conflicts and war violence are shared and visible to many.

An example is the conflict between Israel and Palestine. Since the 7th of October 2023, violence between Israel and Palestine has increased after Hamas launched a series of attacks on Israel. As a response to the attacks of Hamas, Israeli forces have attacked Palestinians (Amnesty International, 2024). Since then, over 37.000 Palestinians have been reported killed and over 1200 Israelis have been reported killed (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [OCHA], 2024). Different media and social media outlets have broadcasted the war violence between Palestine and Israel. Yet, the news on current conflicts can have negative effects on those exposed to these images.

Several studies have found negative effects of “televised trauma” (Bodas et al., 2015; Putnam, 2002), “media-induced secondary trauma” (Comstock & Platania, 2017; Lamba et al., 2023) or “screen trauma” (Pinchevski, 2015) on the mental health of viewers of these images. Research shows how television images of the attacks in the United States on 9/11 and the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995 can be associated with posttraumatic stress symptoms (Ahern et al., 2002; Pfefferbaum et al., 2001; Putnam, 2002). In 2015, Bodas et al. researched the effects of televised trauma on the emotional well-being of the Jewish Israeli audience during a conflict in Gaza. In their study, viewers reported anxiety symptoms that correlated to finding the news stressful but also fearing that information would be missed by not watching the news.

To understand the increase in news consumption during the COVID-19 pandemic and the risk factors of ‘media-induced secondary trauma’, the concept of secondary trauma was used in the study by Lamba et al. (2023). Lamba et al. (2023) found that believing in conspiracy theories increased the risk of media-induced secondary trauma. Secondary traumatic stress (STS) has been researched among healthcare professionals and can be defined as “the natural consequent behaviours and emotions resulting from knowing about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other – the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person” (Hydon et al., 2015, p. 320).

Symptoms of STS are similar to symptoms of PTSD and include symptoms such as “intrusive symptoms, avoidance, negative cognitions and mood, and hyperarousal and reactivity” (Hydon et al., 2015, p. 321). Moreover, studies show how secondary trauma may lead to hypervigilance “including frequent monitoring of news [...] increased bodily anxiety, nightmares or disturbed sleep” (Lamba et al., 2023, p. 2). STS can occur among viewers exposed to traumatic events through (social) media. This can be referred to as ‘media-induced secondary traumatic stress’ by which Comstock and Platania (2017) propose to include laypersons in this concept. Hence, exposure to traumatic images through media or social media can cause symptoms of secondary traumatic stress. However, the effect of exposure to these traumatic images has not yet been researched among refugees and asylum seekers dealing with PTSD in the post-migration context.

Thus, it is unclear if and in how far refugees and asylum seekers dealing with PTSD and post-migration stress are exposed to news on current conflicts. Moreover, it is unclear how this affects their well-being. However, various studies show that PTSD, post-migration stress factors, acculturation, and ‘televised trauma’ can affect well-being negatively. To understand the interaction between stress and well-being, various theories can be employed. These theories will help to understand what well-being entails and how stress can be experienced.

Positive well-being can have benefits on personal and professional levels. Furthermore, it is linked to better physical health and can positively influence the economic performance of a country (Ruggeri et al., 2020). The concept of well-being can be understood in various ways. In research, well-being has been studied from various perspectives, including the hedonic tradition and the eudaimonic tradition. The hedonic tradition approaches well-being as ‘the pleasant life’ while the eudaimonic well-being is focused on ‘the meaningful life’ (Gallagher et al., 2009). The hedonic well-being can also be referred to as the subjective well-being or emotional well-being.

Hedonic well-being theories are based on the idea that pleasure and happiness in life constitute well-being. In this regard, the cognitive experiences of individuals are important. The subjective well-being entails “the experiences of high levels of pleasant emotions and moods, low levels of negative emotions and moods, and high life satisfaction” (Gallagher et al., 2009, p. 2). Diener has been one of the leading authors on subjective well-being and argues that high subjective well-being has a positive influence on social relationships, economic and career success, health and longevity, and general society (Diener & Ryan, 2009). Besides, social interaction and marriage can affect subjective well-being, in which divorce often causes lower subjective well-being (Lucas, 2005, as cited in Diener & Ryan, 2009). Also, unemployment has a negative impact on subjective well-being (Clark, 2009, as cited in Diener & Ryan, 2009).

While pleasure and happiness are one aspect of the well-being of humans, the eudaimonic well-being theories find that there is more to well-being. According to the eudaimonic traditions, a fulfilling life or the realization of one’s nature is what constitutes well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2001). This means that psychological functioning in both personal and social life is important. Keyes (1998) proposes the idea of social well-being, including five dimensions that perceive the self as not merely a “private product” (Keyes, 1998, p. 121). These dimensions are: “social integration, social contribution, social coherence, social actualization, and social acceptance” (Keyes, 1998, p. 121).

These dimensions need to be further explained as they can serve as a framework for understanding social well-being. Social integration entails the idea of feeling part of society. Healthy individuals feel that they have something in common with others and feel “that they belong to their communities and society” (Keyes, 1998, p. 122). Additionally, social contribution refers to the idea that individuals believe that they are of value and are “vital member of society” (Keyes, 1998, p. 122). Besides, individuals want to know about the world and can understand this. This is referred to as ‘social coherence’. Furthermore, social

actualization means that healthy individuals see potentials for society and feel that this is “realized through its institutions and citizens” (Keyes, 1998, p. 123). Lastly, the component of social acceptance in social well-being consists of feelings of trust towards others and believing that other people can be kind and “industrious” (Keyes, 1998, p. 122). In short, this means having a positive outlook on other people. Thus, eudaimonic tradition finds that the social lives and challenges of individuals constitute well-being. As refugees and asylum seekers are part of public processes, this thesis will approach well-being as both emotional and social.

Thus, the emotional and social well-being of refugees and asylum seekers can be affected in various ways, for example, due to acculturation challenges or stress factors such as the asylum procedure. Consequently, stress frequently plays a role in the post-migration phase. To understand the processes of stress that can occur in this context, the conservation of resources theory by Hobfoll (1989) provides a framework. This theoretical framework will serve as the lens through which stress in the post-migration context and the experience and behaviour of the research population can be understood. The model of conservation of resources is based on the idea that a loss or gain of resources is a key component in the experience of stress.

Hobfoll (1989) defines psychological stress as

a reaction to the environment in which there is (a) the threat of a net loss of resources, (b) the net loss of resources, or (c) a lack of resource gain following the investment of resources.

Both perceived and actual loss or lack of gain are envisaged as sufficient for producing stress (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 516).

Psychological stress can also be defined as “a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her resources and endangering his or her wellbeing” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 19). In this definition, the concept of ‘appraisal’ can be found. This is a central concept in studies on stress and it refers to the cognitive individual processes between “an encounter

and the reaction, and the factors that affect the nature of this mediation" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 23). Thus, according to Lazarus and Folkman, based on the cognitive processes of an individual, stress can be produced.

The definition by Lazarus and Folkman provides a basis for understanding stress and the role of appraisal in stress. Supported by this, the definition by Hobfoll (1989) emphasizes the objective reality in which there are "common appraisals" or "objective elements of threat and loss in contexts where culture and biology are shared" (Hobfoll, 2010, p. 127). These common appraisals or centrally valued resources include health, well-being, peace, family, self-preservation, and a positive sense of self. This perspective allows researchers to contextualise the experience of stress by including the environment in this assessment. Based on this idea, in this thesis, post-migration stress will be defined as a reaction to the environment when there is a perceived or actual loss of centrally valued resources or a lack of resource gain after investment during the post-migration phase.

According to Hobfoll (1989), "people strive to retain, protect, and build resources and that what is threatening to them is the potential or actual loss of the valued resources" (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 516). Central to Hobfoll's model are resources. Resources can be seen as "those objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies that are valued by the individual or that serve as a means for the attainment of these objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies" (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 516). For example, resources can be a good marriage, a house, hope, knowledge, financial stability, or feeling successful (Hobfoll, 2010). Resources can be both the means to gain resources, and the ends, the actual resource itself. For example, money can be a resource itself but is often also a means to other resources, such as a house or education.

The conservation of resources model both predicts the behaviour of individuals and also their well-being. The model suggests that every individual strives to gain resources and to protect these resources. However, when an individual loses resources, they can experience

stress. Besides, when there is a threat of losing resources or when no resources are gained after an investment, an individual can also experience stress. An example could be the threat of losing a job because of budget cuts in an organisation. Another example is investing in integration in Dutch society as a refugee but failing to build a social network. These resources losses or threats of resource losses can thus impact the well-being of an individual and lead to stress.

On the other hand, a gain in resources or “resource surpluses” (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 517) can cause the experience of positive well-being. For example, saving money to be more financially stable or getting a promotion at a job. According to Hobfoll (1989), a gain in resources or a surplus of resources can “offset [future] loss” (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 519). Therefore, individuals aim to create resource surpluses to avoid or deal with a possible future loss of resources and thus avoid or deal with the experience of stress. In these cases, social relationships can “provide or facilitate the preservation of resources” (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 517). Hence, social support is not a resource itself but can act as a preserver or facilitator to gain or protect resources. An example could be finding a job through your social network or feeling emotionally supported by friends. When a loss of resources occurs, resources can be replaced. This can be done by direct replacement, symbolic replacement or through indirect means. For example, seeking a new job when becoming unemployed or regaining appreciation after a loss in self-esteem (Hobfoll, 1989). When resources are successfully replaced, the experience of stress can be offset.

In the cases wherein individuals gain or create a surplus of resources, they build “resource caravans” (Hobfoll, 2014, p. 22). This means that resources are linked and are therefore created or lost developmentally. A resource caravan might entail resources that come from finding a job, such as financial stability, perspective for the future, and feeling valuable to society. This means that resources “do not exist in isolation” (Hobfoll, 2014, p. 21). It is therefore likely that a lack of a certain resource could mean a lack of a similar resource, in the same resource caravan (Kuttikat, 2022). Consequently, when a loss of resources takes place, a ‘loss spiral’ can occur

in which there is a loss of similar resources or there is a threat that similar resources will be lost. As described before, a lack of resources indicates that an individual is less able to offset loss. An example of this could be losing a job which creates financial issues, which in turn could lead to losing your house. On the other hand, a gain in resources, for example graduating from university can lead to a high-paying job, which in turn leads to more financial stability.

However, the model of conservation of resources sees that there is no equal distribution of resources. Some individuals are in the position to gain or maintain resources, for example, due to a stable family or a safe neighbourhood. These “resource-enriching environments” (Hobfoll, 2010, p. 130) can help to build and maintain resource caravans. Resource-enriching environments offer individuals an environment or circumstances to invest in resources. While these resource-enriching environments can lead to greater resource caravans, a lack of these environments can negatively influence individuals’ resources. Hobfoll also refers to them as “caravan passageways” (Hobfoll, 2012, p. 229) that “support, foster, enrich, and protect the resources of individuals, families, and organizations, or that detract, undermine, obstruct, or impoverish people’s resource reservoirs” (Hobfoll, 2010, p. 130).

Examples of caravan passageways are families, neighbourhoods or schools. For example, a stable family can ensure a calm environment that contributes to your well-being. On the other hand, an unsafe neighbourhood or living situation can lead to anxiety and fear impacting your well-being and thus leading to stress. Moreover, the environment determines which resources you can gain or lose. A stable and wealthy family does not only allow for a more peaceful environment, it also determines your future perspective such as educational opportunities. The environment can therefore act as a caravan passageway as it determines how far individuals can build resource caravans. Hence, the conservation of resources theory highlights the role of the environment of individuals in behaviour and well-being.

Kuttikat (2022) has researched the resources of refugees in the post-migration phase in refugee camps in India using interviews and surveys. In the post-migration phase, loss spirals can occur among refugees because they often experience a loss of various resources. Due to a lack of resources, such as housing or social status, refugees are less able to offset the loss of other resources. This leads to the loss of similar resources or the threat of losing other resources. Consequently, the loss of resources and the threat of losing other resources can cause stress in the post-migration phase. Post-migration stress can thus be understood based on the model of conservation of resources by Hobfoll, in which common appraisals of resources that are lost and gained can explain the well-being and behaviour among refugees. Especially for refugees in the post-migration phase, a lack of resource-enriching environments and the loss of resources can cause loss spirals, leading to the experience of stress.

In conclusion, this chapter has provided an overview of the relevant literature and theoretical frameworks that provide an understanding of the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers with PTSD regarding exposure to news on current conflicts and post-migration stress. This chapter highlighted the current literature on ‘media-induced secondary trauma’ or ‘televised trauma’. Based on various studies on ‘televised trauma’ or ‘media-induced secondary trauma’, images of traumatic events can have negative effects on the well-being of viewers of these images. It examined the context of the post-migration phase, which includes socio-economic, social, and procedural stressors, acculturation processes, and PTSD symptoms.

Based on this literature review, a gap is found in research on media-induced secondary trauma within the post-migration context among refugees and asylum seekers dealing with PTSD. Therefore, it is unknown how refugees and asylum seekers navigate exposure to news on current conflicts and how it affects their well-being. The conservation of resources model by Hobfoll (1989) and the well-being theories by Diener and Ryan (2009) and Keyes (1998) have been described to provide a framework for exploring the relation between exposure to

news on current conflicts and post-migration stress. Both social and emotional well-being are relevant to include in the examination of the effects of exposure to news. Based on the concepts described in this chapter and embedded in these academic discussions, this thesis aims to fill the gap and shed light on the effect of exposure to news on current conflicts on refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands dealing with PTSD and its relation to post-migration stress.

## **Methodological Approach**

Shedding light on the effect of watching news on current conflicts on refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands dealing with PTSD in the post-migration context has been done based on qualitative methods. This chapter will describe the research methods used to explore the effect of exposure to news on current conflicts on the well-being of refugees and asylum seekers with PTSD and the relation these effects have to post-migration stress. The chapter describes the research design, the emic perspective of the research, the data collection, and the thematic data analysis. Furthermore, to minimise harm to participants and the researcher, the ethical considerations of this thesis will be outlined.

### ***Design Overview***

To examine the impact of exposure to news on current conflicts among refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands dealing with PTSD, qualitative research has been conducted at a transcultural psychiatry centre of a Dutch mental health care organisation. At this centre, around 500 people with different cultural backgrounds and mental disorders are treated, including asylum seekers and refugees with PTSD. Semi-structured in-depth interviews have been conducted with six adult refugees and asylum seekers with a diagnosis of PTSD. The interviews have been transcribed and coded using the software program Atlas. ti (ATLAS.ti, 2023). The researcher analysed the data using a thematic analysis.

A qualitative method of collecting data has a contextual function as it allows participants to describe phenomena in their own terms and allows the researcher to explore and understand the experiences of participants and identify processes. In qualitative research, the perspective of participants is embraced (Hennink et al., 2020). Furthermore, it can serve an explanatory function as it allows the researcher to “examine subjects in depth” (Ritchie et al., 2003, p. 60) and thus assess the possible causes and influences of the phenomena. Therefore, in contrast to a quantitative research approach, a qualitative research approach allows for the exploration and

contextualization of the post-migration phase of the participants and experiences of refugees and asylum seekers dealing with PTSD regarding exposure to the news on conflicts.

The exploration and contextualization of the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands dealing with PTSD will be examined from the perspective of the participants themselves. This is also referred to as the ‘emic perspective’ which stems from the interpretive paradigm in social sciences (Hennink et al., 2020, p. 15). Research with an emic perspective entails that the subjective meanings of participants regarding their experiences are focused on, to understand the experiences and social contexts of participants. This perspective recognizes that the experiences of participants exist in certain contexts, such as historical, cultural or social. This thesis adopts this emic perspective because cultural and social contexts, such as post-migration stress factors, are important for the study population treated in a transcultural psychiatry centre.

### **Researcher**

The researcher of this thesis is a 26-year-old female of Dutch nationality studying the MA in Religion, Conflict and Globalization at the University of Groningen. Due to working experience with refugees and asylum seekers, the research population was not entirely new to work with. Because of previous experience, the researcher had a prior understanding of the various issues that the research population deals with. Furthermore, this prior understanding enhanced the interview techniques as the researcher had experience with telephone interpreters and intercultural communication. On the other hand, the researcher had no previous working experience in the context of psychiatric care. Furthermore, the researcher was already working as a research assistant at the transcultural psychiatry centre, where the research was conducted. At this centre, she also followed her internship in the same period that the research was conducted.

## **Participants**

Six adult refugees and asylum seekers have participated in this study. Five of these participants are male and one participant is female, with an age range from 27 to 60 years old. During the data collection process, all participants were under treatment at the centre of transcultural psychiatry of a Dutch mental health care organisation for different mental health problems, including symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The countries of origin of participants varied, participants have fled from Bosnia, Colombia, Eritrea, Iran, Uganda, and Syria.

## **Researcher – Participant Relationship**

Some participants might have been familiar with the researcher because of her position as a research assistant and intern. While they might have seen her in the hallways or during some group therapy activities, the researcher was not present at any individual treatment moments. Because of familiarity with some participants, participants might have had more trust. This could have led to a more open conversation between the participant and the researcher. On the other hand, it might have been harder for the researcher to be objective.

## ***Participant Recruitment***

Patients at the transcultural psychiatry centre could participate if they were adults, meaning individuals above 18 years old, refugees or asylum seekers, and if they had a diagnosis of PTSD. This diagnosis was confirmed by the practitioner before inclusion. If someone was incapable of reflecting on their situation, suffering from acute psychosis, or emotionally incapable of doing an interview, they would be excluded from the research. Since the participants of this research are a vulnerable group due to their mental health issues and socioeconomic position, ethical considerations have been made to minimize harm. To protect participants and the researcher during the research, the practitioners at the centre for transcultural psychiatry have served as a filter between the patients and the researcher. This entails that practitioners were

contacted before the patients were informed about the research. Practitioners are better able to judge the mental health of the patient and could therefore give insight into whether a patient was suitable and emotionally stable enough to participate in this research. To further protect the participants, the name and location of the transcultural psychiatry centre are not named in the thesis. As the research was conducted with patients from a Dutch mental health care organisation, the medical ethical review committee (METc) of the University Medical Center Groningen (UMCG) assessed the research proposal before inclusion and has granted a non-WMO statement (see Appendix A).

Before participating in the research, patients at the transcultural centre were informed by practitioners about this research. Verbally and via e-mail, the researcher spread information to practitioners about the content and goals of the research. Furthermore, flyers providing an overview of the research were distributed among practitioners in Arabic, Dutch, and English (see Appendix B). This flyer was designed to make the recruitment process easier for the practitioners and the researcher. When patients were suitable to participate in this research and interested in participating, they were contacted by the researcher via telephone or face-to-face. During this moment, they were informed about the aim and content of the research. Furthermore, they received the information letter (see Appendix C). They were informed that participation is voluntary and that they could withdraw from the research at any time. They had time to consider participating for around seven days. If they had not contacted the researcher before this time, the researcher would contact them to answer further questions and to ask if they were willing to participate. If they wanted to participate, they signed the informed consent and an appointment for an interview was made.

### ***Data Collection***

To collect data, in-depth interviews have been conducted with adult refugees or asylum seekers dealing with PTSD, who are under treatment at a Dutch centre for transcultural

psychiatry. Several studies show how interviews can bring further understanding on the topic of post-migration stress and mental disorders among refugees or asylum seekers. The study of Groen et al. (2019) used qualitative research methods to provide an understanding of how the relationships between potentially traumatic events (PTEs), postmigration living problems (PMLPs), acculturation, and psychopathology might lead to mental health issues. Through conducting interviews, qualitative data provided insight into how these relationships might change the cultural identity after migration. Besides, the study by Silove et al. (1997) has researched the associations between anxiety, depression and PTSD in asylum seekers and post-migration stress factors, such as the asylum application process in the host country. To assess these relationships, the researchers conducted interviews.

In-depth interviews offer participants the opportunity to share their experiences and perspectives (Hennink et al, 2020). Furthermore, they allow the researcher to identify personal experiences and contextualise these experiences. During in-depth interviews, the interviewee shares their perspective based on questions asked by the interviewer. This requires that the interviewer asks questions in an “open, empathic way” (Hennink et al., 2020, p. 116). For this research, the interviews were semi-structured, meaning that there was room for the interviewee to share other topics and themes or for the interviewer to probe or focus on a different theme, based on answers given by the participant. The interview guide was formulated based on the operationalisation of the theoretical framework (see Appendix D). The operationalisation of concepts described in the theoretical framework ensures the validity of content and concepts in this research. Furthermore, the emic perspective of this thesis is reflected in the interview protocol, as the formulated questions have taken into consideration the current situation of the participant and the post-migration context they exist.

The aim was to include six to eight participants. Because of limited time to conduct the research, six interviews have been conducted from the end of April 2024 until the start of June

2024. During the phase of data collection, the researcher stayed aware of possible saturation as the coding and analysing of the interviews, and the recruitment of new participants took place concurrently. Saturation is reached when no new data is found during the analysis of interviews (Hennink et al., 2020). During four of the interviews, an interpreter was used via telephone because the participant did not master the Dutch or English language well. One interview was conducted in English. Furthermore, the interviews were conducted one-on-one. Interviewing with only the participant present limits the influence of external factors on the answers of participants. Limiting the influence of external factors ensures the internal validity of the research. Besides this, it makes the interview more reproducible. The average duration of the interviews was 80 minutes. All participants gave verbal permission to record the interview using a voice recorder from the University of Groningen. After this, the audio was transcribed with the support of the program Amberscript (Amberscript, n.d.).

### ***Data Analysis***

The personal data of the participants has been pseudonymized. This has been done by assigning participants a randomized number after their personal data, or ‘direct identifiers’ (Elliot et al., 2016, p. 17), were included in an ‘inclusion document’. In further documents, only the randomized number of a participant was used to indicate this participant. The personal information of this participant will only be traceable in the ‘inclusion document’ to which only the researcher has access. By doing this, re-identification is made more difficult (Elliot et al., 2016) as the number assigned to the participant is randomized.

The transcriptions of the interviews have been coded and analysed using the qualitative data analysis software program ATLAS. ti (ATLAS.ti, 2023). The first cycle of coding was done by open coding, which includes descriptive codes with the least possible interpretation (Mihas, 2023). This is also referred to as reductive coding to group data together and to reduce the amount of material to general terms. This reductive code serves as a basis for coding “as a

conceptual device” (Schreier, 2012, p. 3). During coding as a conceptual device, the data is related to concepts and how they are intertwined (Schreier, 2012). In contrast to the more descriptive way of reductive coding, this cycle of coding asks for the interpretation of the data.

Based on these codes, a thematic analysis with both an inductive and deductive approach has been done. A thematic analysis can be defined as “a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 6). These patterns or themes are found in the transcriptions and codes of the interviews based on the prevalence of certain codes, the importance of a certain element for the participant or the interaction this element has with other key concepts. Based on this method of analysis, this thesis reports the experiences and realities of participants with an *emic* perspective and makes use of the theoretical foundations described to find themes deductively. Moreover, themes and patterns have been found inductively in interviews through thematic analysis.

To conduct a thematic analysis, Braun & Clarke (2006) have listed six steps: familiarisation with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Through conducting, transcribing, and reading the interviews, the researcher became familiar with the data. To generate the initial codes, mainly the words of the participant were used to stay close to their reality. Searching for themes, reviewing themes, and naming these themes were done simultaneously to make connections and refine the themes. This was deductively done by creating a coding frame based on the operationalisation of the theoretical framework. A coding frame can serve as a structure for the analysis of the interviews (Schreier, 2012). Inductively, themes were added to this code frame. Finally, the results were written based on this thematic analysis. In this chapter, the process of conducting qualitative research based on semi-structured in-depth interviews has been described, paving the way for the examination of the effects of watching news on current conflicts on refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands dealing with PTSD.

## Results

It is thus unclear how news on current conflicts relates to post-migration stress for refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands dealing with PTSD. Refugees and asylum seekers deal with pre-migration, migration, and post-migration stress factors. For example, they suffer from post-traumatic stress symptoms or are worried about family members residing in other countries. Based on six interviews conducted with refugees and asylum seekers dealing with PTSD, the experiences of participants regarding exposure to news on current conflicts will be outlined in this chapter. The findings of this thesis are organized and presented based on the research questions and the themes that were found inductively.

This chapter will describe how refugees and asylum seekers approach and engage with the news on current conflicts in different ways. To begin with, this chapter examines how refugees and asylum seekers are exposed to news on current conflicts. Additionally, it examines how these ways of exposure affect their well-being. Furthermore, coping strategies that are employed by refugees and asylum seekers will be described in relation to their social well-being. Finally, the chapter highlights the different considerations and motivations of participants regarding their exposure to news on current conflicts. The findings of this thesis will eventually answer the research question: ‘In what way does exposure to news on current conflicts relate to post-migration stress for refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands dealing with PTSD?’.

### ***Ways of Exposure and Emotional Well-Being***

Participants are exposed to news on current conflicts in various ways. The nature of the content they encounter differs from updates on global conflicts to disturbing images and videos of violence and destruction. This exposure to news on current conflicts negatively impacts the emotional well-being of participants. For participants, it worsens PTSD symptoms, such as flashbacks, concentration issues, or sleeping issues. In addition, it contributes to the stress they

already experience in the post-migration phase, often related to the asylum procedure. Furthermore, negative emotions are experienced by participants, such as sadness, fear and anxiety.

Through various channels, participants follow the news. These channels include BBC, NOS, local media from their home countries, and social media platforms such as X, YouTube, Facebook or Instagram. Additionally, the frequency of exposure to news on current conflicts varies among participants. Some participants are familiar with previous exposure to the news and some participants still watch the news regularly. Two participants stated that they watch the news approximately once a day via news channels such as BBC, NOS, or local media outlets from their country of origin or neighbouring countries. One participant is exposed to news more than once a day on social media, specifically via X. This participant often scrolls on this media platform. Besides this, this participant watches the local Dutch news or news from their country of origin. Due to advice from their practitioner, they stopped watching the news on BBC and YouTube.

Another participant watches the news less than once a week but sometimes searches for updates on their country of origin, or neighbouring countries. Based on advice from their practitioner, one participant does not follow the news anymore. Before this, they followed and were active in political and religious discussions on social media. These discussions were often related to their country of origin. Another participant showed videos via YouTube during the interview on the situation in their country of origin. On the other hand, this participant states how they are rarely exposed to news.

Hence, through exposure to news, participants are informed about the situation in their country of origin or countries where family members reside; “bombings by another country, yes my place, my countries” (*Participant 2*), “Where does the bomb fall...” (*Participant 2*), “Twitter [X] posts about the political situation in my country” (*Participant 3*). One participant

is informed about the news on their country of origin via their friends. Besides the images broadcasted by media outlets, individuals can upload videos on conflict situations; “there are of course many people, who record videos themselves of the violence and the murders, and they post it online” (*Participant 6*).

Furthermore, while watching the general news or scrolling on social media, participants are exposed to various updates and images on current conflicts, such as the conflict between Israel and Palestine or the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. These images can contain footage of damaged buildings, wounded people, or children who have died during conflicts. One participant sees “images of houses that are damaged, who are burned, and dead bodies on the streets, covered with the remains of the explosions” (*Participant 1*). In some cases, the news includes footage of protests or fighting on the streets; “sometimes it’s these people who are protesting [...], pro-Gaza or pro-Israel” (*Participant 3*). “...sometimes you scroll and see people on the street protesting. They are fighting, the police is fighting them. [...] You see people being beaten” (*Participant 3*).

Consequently, this exposure to news on current conflicts and violence can cause emotional reactions in the participants. All participants describe how the news on conflicts makes them think about their past experiences of war and conflict. Participants relive these experiences or experience flashbacks; “then the association comes in the bad moments, the moments you have lived” (*Participant 1*), “it makes me feel like as if I’m back in the days when I was tortured” (*Participant 3*), “some of what I see, I went through it” (*Participant 3*), “it makes me think of the past, and therefore I get a lot of stress” (*Participant 5*), “I think about the whole situation very badly and everything that has happened, and then I get really afraid” (*Participant 6*).

Experiencing flashbacks and reliving past experiences can be related to the PTSD symptoms that participants experience. For participants, PTSD manifests through flashbacks, anxiety, and feelings of being lost. One participant describes how they experience flashbacks during their

sleep or that they feel “lost in the situation” (*Participant 1*). Some participants feel as if they are in between the Netherlands and their country of origin; “you are lost between here and your country” (*Participant 2*). Furthermore, two participants stated how they experience anxiety when walking in the streets, fearing that someone will hurt them; “I always feel stressed or anxious, the whole time” (*Participant 6*).

Additionally, most participants describe how watching the news evokes feelings of fear and anxiety, for example, because of family members who might be in conflict situations; “I feel afraid, because when I read or see that they have killed someone else, then I think they will kill my family and me as well” (*Participant 6*). Also, it causes worries about the future. Participants state how they start overthinking and worrying; “in my head, I was constantly busy with it. [...] Will there be a third world war... [...] That kind of stuff” (*Participant 5*). “...bigger things that happen, like the attack from Israel on the consulate of [country of origin] and what happens after this. I can experience unrest from this. [...] Especially when it concerns the situation in countries where my family members live” (*Participant 5*), “while it was hours ago that something was discussed [...], in my head I could still be busy with it, the whole time” (*Participant 5*).

Participants experience stress due to worries about family or because they miss their country of origin. Two participants share how they have lost family members in their country of origin during their time in the Netherlands. While in the Netherlands, they worry about the safety of family members. Furthermore, most participants share how they miss their country of origin; “it is hard for me to imagine that I had to leave my country, my life, my family” (*Participant 6*).

Besides, for three participants exposure to news on current conflicts causes negative thoughts and sleeping issues, such as nightmares or sleepless nights. Especially in the evening, exposure to news on current conflicts can lead to sleeping issues. Participants state how they experience

nightmares or sleepless nights; “I sleep and then in a dream, a flashback comes. [...] Then you are directly awake and you don’t know, where are you? [...] Nirvana, nowhere...” (*Participant 1*), “Because after watching, it doesn’t stop there. It keeps on carrying on in my brain, my head” (*Participant 3*), “and then the whole night would be hectic: nightmares, sleepless nights. And by morning, I feel as if I’ve been fighting the whole night” (*Participant 3*). Already, participants experience sleeping issues due to having experienced traumatic events or various stress factors in the Netherlands, such as the asylum procedure. One participant states how the journey to the Netherlands causes nightmares and sleepless nights; “maybe the only thing good is I’m still alive” (*Participant 3*).

Furthermore, participants experience other negative emotions when exposed to news on current conflicts, such as feeling sad, “heavy” (*Participant 3*), painful, and angry. When seeing images of children who are dying, one participant cries: “Especially children who die, yes, then the tears come” (*Participant 4*). This participant states that they feel sad because there is a lot of respect for the dead in their country of origin; “dead bodies are valuable [...], I grew up in that kind of culture and therefore when I see people being killed and dead bodies, I become sad” (*Participant 4*). For another participant, seeing the images causes “pressure” (*Participant 2*), as they point toward their chest. This might be similar to the feeling of heaviness, that another participant describes. One participant feels hopeless when seeing images of conflict; “will someone help those people and explain what is going on?” (*Participant 1*). They state that “the war is just pain, suffering, and loss” (*Participant 1*). Another participant “breaks down” (*Participant 5*) and experiences concentration issues after exposure to news on current conflicts.

Hence, many participants experience stress due to exposure to news on current conflicts. Exposure to news on current conflicts adds to the stress they already experience from factors such as their living situation, asylum procedure, or mental health issues. One participant states; “look, I have stress to here [holds hand above their shoulder], and I do not want a step more

with stress [holds hand to their face]" (*Participant 2*). Another participant states; "well, I always feel bad. I always feel stressed or anxious, all the time" (*Participant 6*). When exposed to news, this participant feels "afraid" (*Participant 6*).

Already, participants experience stress due to various post-migration stress factors, for example regarding the asylum procedure or living situation. For participants, the asylum procedure causes "negative thoughts all the time" (*Participant 3*) and fear of having to return to their country of origin; "you constantly have the fear that you will be deported from the country or will be sent back" (*Participant 5*). One participant states that they are "terribly afraid of having to return to [country of origin]" (*Participant 6*). Besides, during the asylum procedure participants have little future perspective. One participant stated how they feel as if their life is on pause; "sometimes I get thoughts like, as if I'm a loser or something like that" (*Participant 3*). Furthermore, the living situation of participants causes stress as there are tensions and conflicts at the asylum seekers' centre or temporary housing. Participants describe their living situation as; "very bad, it's just unliveable" (*Participant 4*) and they "can't wish for anyone to live" (*Participant 3*) at the asylum seekers centre.

Thus, exposure to news on current conflicts often triggers emotional reactions among participants, including flashbacks, fear, and anxiety. Additionally, exposure to news on current conflicts worsens existing mental health issues, leading to sleep disturbances, nightmares, and concentration problems. Feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and anger are also common, particularly when participants see images of death and suffering, especially of children. As participants already experience stress due to post-migration stress factors, such as the asylum procedure or their living situation, exposure to news on current conflicts adds to their stress. For some participants, the emotional responses they experience are intertwined with worries about family members living in conflict situations. Concluding, exposure to news on current

conflicts worsens PTSD symptoms and contributes to the stress they experience in the post-migration phase.

### ***Coping***

As exposure to news on current conflicts negatively impacts the emotional well-being of participants, participants state to avoid the news on current conflicts or the news in general to protect their mental health. Besides, advice from practitioners can influence avoidance behaviours. When experiencing negative emotions, for example, ‘feeling lost’, some participants seek distractions like walking or listening to music to return to the present. Yet, participants do not share these emotions and experiences with others due to difficulties trusting others or wanting to be alone in these moments. In the Netherlands, participants experience cultural differences and language barriers. Therefore, they have little contact with others. Still, some participants have the desire to learn the Dutch language and be more social.

In several ways, participants try to avoid the news on current conflicts by interrupting or not watching the news. Interrupting the exposure to news on conflicts is a way to prevent experiencing negative emotions or mental issues. Two participants stated how they avoid the news in general. One of these participants, who might still see the news once a week, turns off the news directly when images of war or violence are broadcast. They are calmer when they do not watch images of conflict situations. Another participant who still watches the general news “interrupts” as soon as images of war and violence are broadcast; “I have already experienced that once. [...] I am quieter and calmer when I don’t watch it” (*Participant 1*). Another participant stopped watching the news in general due to advice from their practitioner. Moreover, they avoid political discussions in general; “then I just walk away” (*Participant 5*). Since they stopped following these discussions, they experience more peace; “the less stress [...], the more I have control over myself, and my situation” (*Participant 5*).

While participants try to avoid watching the news, they sometimes listen to the news. Some participants state how listening to the news is easier. These participants state how images are more difficult to watch. “Listening I would say is a bit lighter to me” (*Participant 3*), “I can listen, but [...] the images I can’t see” (*Participant 1*), “watching, I find it heavier than listening” (*Participant 3*). Still, one participant states that they sometimes visualise what they hear. These visualisations cause difficulties for this participant, even though they find listening easier. Besides, one participant states how they sometimes read the titles of news items, as this is also easier for them.

To cope, participants try to distract themselves when experiencing negative emotions or sleeping issues from watching the news. Participants employ various coping strategies. Two participants stated how they go for a walk to stabilise themselves; “just walking around a bit” (*Participant 1*). Furthermore, they practice hobbies such as gardening or listening to music. For one participant, reading and writing is a way to relax and “relieve my pain” (*Participant 3*). This can help in returning to the present. For one participant, practising psychomotor exercises helps them to calm down most of the time. Sometimes this participant needs medication when feeling distressed.

Although participants seek distractions to cope with negative emotions and effects from exposure to news on current conflicts, participants do not share this with others. Participants state to have difficulties trusting others or wanting to be alone in these moments. Most participants do not share their feelings with others; “I don’t talk with people about this kind of stuff” (*Participant 4*). According to this participant, this is because of the difficulties they experience in trusting others. Another participant states how they would rather be alone in these moments. For one participant, the news is just a small part of life; “You have to live life” (*Participant 1*). Therefore, they do not share their feelings with others. For another participant, while trying to be more social, finding the right person to share their feelings with is difficult.

Yet, one participant does share their feelings with friends, for example when the news is painful or when they feel angry. However, for them; “sharing does not help. [...] The stress does not get less” (*Participant 2*). Still, two participants do share their feelings and experiences with practitioners at the centre for transcultural psychiatry, because these practitioners are “experts” (*Participant 5*) and “professionals” (*Participant 3*).

Based on the interviews, the social well-being of participants can be described as low. All participants state how they experience difficulties in trusting others. One participant states how this is due to their experiences; “the journey to get here is very bad. [...] It is very difficult to trust people” (*Participant 4*). Many participants have little social contact with others due to difficulties in trusting others; “I also do not have many contacts with... in the society” (*Participant 5*), “I don’t participate in society” (*Participant 2*). One participant feels “that I’m in the world alone” (*Participant 3*).

Additionally, participants experience language barriers and cultural differences in the Netherlands. Due to this, social contact remains shallow. One participant feels that they have to be careful when talking to others; “It can come across in the wrong way because you don’t know those people well because of the Dutch culture” (*Participant 2*). This participant plays in a local football team but after seven years can still not understand the local dialect and “special jokes” (*Participant 2*). One participant states how they experience cultural differences regarding more individualistic perspectives in the Netherlands compared to more collective perspectives in their country of origin.

As participants experience these difficulties in social contact due to various reasons, they try to be more social and to learn the Dutch language. Various participants work on learning the Dutch language. Furthermore, some participants find that their experience in the Netherlands improves after several years. One participant finds it important to learn new things about Dutch society through reading books. “I don’t know how, I can’t explain, but getting to know about

different things gives me some confidence" (*Participant 3*). This participant plans to practice their previous profession again in the Netherlands. Several participants state how they are working on becoming more social by greeting others on the streets; "when I'm walking in the streets that I look around and look kindly to others and say hello. [...] Kind of the beginning of learning how to make contact with others." (*Participant 5*).

Thus, participants practice different ways of coping to deal with the negative effects of exposure to news on current conflicts. Some participants interrupt the news or avoid social media. Several participants described how they sometimes listen to the news instead of watching. When experiencing negative emotions, participants seek distractions such as walking, gardening, or practising other hobbies to return to the present. Yet, participants do not share their negative emotions and experiences with others as they experience difficulties in trusting others and have little social contact due to cultural differences and language barriers. Therefore, social contact remains shallow and they feel as if they do not participate in society. However, efforts to learn the Dutch language and be more social indicate a desire to integrate and hope for the future.

### ***Considerations and Motivations***

Despite efforts to avoid the news on current conflicts due to the negative effects and advice from practitioners, participants often find themselves exposed to the news on current conflicts. Different considerations and motivations shape how participants navigate their exposure to news on current conflicts. With this, the environment of participants plays a role in the exposure to news on current conflicts. The news can act as a source of information to keep informed about the safety of family members, or because there is hope to return to their country of origin one day. Additionally, the news can act as a means to integrate into Dutch society.

Due to different reasons, participants are exposed to news on current conflicts. Especially the situation of family members influences how participants navigate exposure to news. In

various ways, participants are in contact with family, such as Facebook or WhatsApp. The situation of family members residing in other countries or the country of origin of participants makes it harder for participants to control their exposure. Three participants stated how they find it difficult to stop watching the news on their country of origin. A participant states that they are still exposed to news on the current situation in their country of origin as they see videos and images shared by their social network, for example via Facebook or YouTube. Furthermore, they follow the national newspaper. Besides, the partner of this participant has videos on their phone “I try to not watch these videos, also not from [country of origin]. But eventually you just see them, it is impossible to stay away from them” (*Participant 6*). While these videos cause stress and anxiety, the participant states; “yes, I still watch the news, because I have family that still lives in [country of origin]” (*Participant 6*). While this participant made conflicting statements regarding exposure to news, this indicates how the environment influences exposure to news.

Another participant sometimes receives messages in the family group chat on the current situation in their country of origin or other countries where family members reside. When something regarding a conflict situation is shared, this participant tries not to read it. However, when they do read it, they find it hard to stop as they might search for updates on the news on current conflicts. Besides, for one participant, it is important to know what is going on in their country of origin because their younger sister is there; “if something is happening there and I don’t know what’s going on there and something bad happens to her, I don’t think I’ll ever forgive myself” (*Participant 3*). This participant feels responsible for their sister and guilty that they cannot be there for her. They state; “she expects comfort and confidence from me. Yet I’m also sometimes feeling vulnerable, but I can’t open up to her” (*Participant 3*). Being informed about the situation in their country of origin helps with this sense of responsibility, as the participant might be able to advise their sister when something is happening.

Besides the role of family in exposure to news, other social contacts influence news exposure as well. Three participants stated how they see images and videos via group chats on WhatsApp. One of these participants was a member of political group chats from their country of origin. In these groups, messages and updates on the situation in their country of origin would often be shared; “more than 90 per cent would be traumatic and heavy” (*Participant 3*). The participant noticed that when someone would share something, they would start searching for more information to confirm the message or learn more about the news. While they are no longer part of these group chats anymore, they are still exposed to news on conflicts through media platform X. The participant finds it hard to stop scrolling on X; “I would say I’m obsessed” (*Participant 3*). Another participant searches for updates when news from their country of origin reaches them through their environment, for example via his friends. The participant then reads titles and searches for details when there is violence because they “wait for the good news” (*Participant 2*). When the situation in their country of origin improves, the participant might want to return with their partner. Thus, this participant is exposed to news on the conflict in their country of origin in hopes of one day returning.

Additionally, another reason for watching the news is to integrate into Dutch society. Two participants stated how they watch the national and local Dutch news to learn the Dutch language and to learn about the current situation in the Netherlands. For one participant feeling part of society is important. Watching the news makes this participant feel more aware and therefore “contributed towards something” (*Participant 3*). This participant states that, in general, they are someone who likes to learn new things; “just being aware, like feeling aware about my environment” (*Participant 3*). Thus, exposure to news can offer ways to integrate into Dutch society as well.

While these are reasons to be exposed to the news, some participants have clear reasons for not being exposed to the news. In these cases, the perspective of participants on the media or

society in general affects their ways of exposure. One participant perceives the media as propaganda and finds that there is “no honest news” (*Participant 2*). This participant does not watch the news as they feel that they cannot change anything. Furthermore, this participant does not trust the media because “governments, some organisations, or the people in power [want to] reach their own goals” (*Participant 2*). Another participant chooses to not watch the news because they want to focus on getting better. Not being exposed to the news on current conflicts makes them feel “better, and my psychological situation has of course also improved because of this” (*Participant 5*). In this case, the well-being of the participant is the deciding factor for not being exposed to news on current conflicts.

Thus, the considerations and motivations behind the exposure to news on current conflicts vary. Despite efforts to avoid the news, many participants are still exposed to the news on current conflicts. Feelings of responsibility, such as staying informed about the safety of family members, or hope for one day returning home, drive participants to engage with the news. Hence, the social networks and environment of participants influence exposure to news, making it hard to control this exposure. Furthermore, some participants find it important to stay informed about the Netherlands or to learn the Dutch language, aiding their integration into Dutch society. On the other hand, other participants distrust the media and believe that individuals cannot influence conflict situations, leading them to avoid the news. Besides, a participant highlights the desire to improve their well-being, motivating them to avoid the news to maintain a positive well-being. These varied considerations and motivations shape how participants navigate their exposure to news on current conflicts.

## Final Reflections and Limitations

With a qualitative research approach, this thesis aims to shed light on the effect of exposure to news on current conflicts among refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands dealing with PTSD and how this interacts with post-migration stress. In the second chapter, existing relevant literature and theoretical concepts and frameworks have been outlined. For instance, the understanding of acculturation processes, studies on post-migration stress, the perspectives on social and emotional well-being, the concept of media-induced secondary trauma, and the conservation of resources theory by Hobfoll (1989). Specifically, the conservation of resources theory will serve as the lens through which the perspective and experience of participants are contextualised. In the third chapter, the research methods have been described by which the emic perspective of this research is reflected in the contextualisation of the experiences of participants and the focus of the perspective of participants in the interview protocol.

Six adult participants diagnosed with PTSD from a transcultural psychiatry centre in the Netherlands participated in semi-structured in-depth interviews. These participants fled from Bosnia, Colombia, Eritrea, Iran, Uganda, and Syria and have shared their experiences on exposure to news on current conflicts. Firstly, this final chapter will analyse how the different findings interact with each other and with the concepts and theories discussed in the second chapter. Based on this analysis, conclusions are drawn to answer the research question: *“In what way does exposure to news on current conflicts relate to post-migration stress for refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands dealing with PTSD?”*. Secondly, the limitations and strengths of this research will be outlined, by which will be reflected upon the research design and research process. Lastly, the implications and recommendations for future studies will be offered based on the findings and limitations described.

## ***Conclusion***

Based on the qualitative research conducted, exposure to news on current conflicts can be considered a factor that adds to stress in the post-migration phase, as it worsens PTSD symptoms and leads to negative emotions. On the other hand, during the post-migration phase, exposure to news on current conflicts can act as a source of information and a means to integrate into Dutch society. The findings show that refugees and asylum seekers dealing with PTSD have different considerations and motivations that navigate exposure to news on current conflicts. Influenced by various factors, such as acculturation, concerns about their well-being, worries about family members, and perspectives on the future, refugees and asylum seekers are motivated to either avoid or be exposed to news on current conflicts. While exposure to news on current conflicts can be seen as a post-migration stress factor for refugees and asylum seekers with PTSD, it can also act as a resource for knowledge, integration and feelings of hope. Therefore, refugees and asylum seekers can be exposed to news to gain resources and in this way improve their social well-being in the post-migration phase. The results of this thesis elaborate on the academic discussion on post-migration stress as it specifically has examined the relation of exposure to news on current conflicts and post-migration stress. Exposure to news on current conflicts is an understudied subject among refugees and asylum seekers dealing with PTSD, who are also dealing with different post-migration stress factors.

The findings of this thesis illustrate how exposure to news on current conflicts negatively impacts the mental health of refugees and asylum seekers dealing with PTSD as it worsens PTSD symptoms. Participants are exposed to the news on current conflicts in various ways. Through channels such as BBC, NOS, local media platforms from their countries of origin, and social media platforms such as X and YouTube, images and updates on conflict situations reach them. These images contain footage of protests, violence, and destruction, which can be described as “televised trauma” (Bodas et al., 2015; Putnam, 2002), “media-induced secondary

trauma" (Comstock & Platania, 2017; Lamba et al., 2023) or "screen trauma" (Pinchevski, 2015). Due to exposure to news on current conflicts, participants have stated how they experience flashbacks, sleeping issues, fear, and anxiety which are similar to symptoms of PTSD and secondary traumatic stress (STS) (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Hydon et al., 2015; Lamba et al.).

Furthermore, participants state how they feel hopeless, sad, or angry after exposure to news on current conflicts. This news includes but is not limited to, images of protests, damaged buildings, wounded people, and bombings. The emotions participants experience after exposure can be described as negative emotions, indicating that exposure to news on current conflicts negatively affects the emotional well-being of refugees and asylum seekers dealing with PTSD. Based on hedonic well-being theories, high levels of negative emotions and moods in combination with experiencing low levels of "pleasant emotions and moods" and a low life satisfaction can indicate a low subjective or emotional well-being (Diener & Ryan, 2009; Gallagher et al., 2009, p. 2). A lower emotional well-being can affect other aspects of life, such as social relationships or health (Diener & Ryan, 2009).

In addition, exposure to news on current conflicts adds to the stress that refugees and asylum seekers experience in the post-migration phase. The post-migration phase that refugees and asylum seekers exist in has been examined in several studies. These studies show that different societal domains, for example, the asylum procedure or lack of work, contribute to stress and psychiatric symptoms (Silove et al., 1997). Other examples of post-migration stressors, as described in the second chapter, include fear of being sent home, social isolation or worries about family (Alexander et al., 2021; Malm et al., 2020; Rzepka et al., 2022). In this thesis, based on the conservation of resources theory by Hobfoll (1989), post-migration stress is understood as a reaction to the environment when there is a perceived or actual loss of centrally valued resources or a lack of resource gain after investment in the post-migration phase.

Post-migration stress is largely experienced by participants due to the asylum procedure or the current living situation of participants. Besides, many participants worry about family residing in other countries. Participants describe their living situation as ‘unliveable’ and experience stress due to tensions in their environment. Referring to the conservation of resources model by Hobfoll (1989), the environments of individuals can be perceived as “caravan passageways” that can help to protect or enrich resources but can also “detract, undermine, obstruct, or impoverish” (Hobfoll, 2010, p. 130) resources. In some cases, the living situations of participants obstruct or undermine their resources as they experience stress and tension. Because of this, refugees and asylum seekers are more vulnerable to a greater loss of resources, as explained by Hobfoll (2010).

Resources are “those objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies that are valued by the individual or that serve as a means for the attainment of these objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies” (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 516). Examples of resources could be socioeconomic status, knowledge, hope, or marriage. Hobfoll states how individuals strive to protect or retain resources and can experience stress when “there is (a) the threat of a net loss of resources, (b) the net loss of resources, or (c) a lack of resource gain following the investment of resources (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 516)”. Thus, a lack of resource-enriching environments, for example, a safe neighbourhood or a wealthy family, impacts the well-being and behaviour of individuals.

Consequently, the uncertainty of the asylum procedure can be perceived as a post-migration stress factor for different participants. During the asylum procedure, participants fear that they have to return to their country of origin. Besides, they have fewer possibilities to travel to family members in other countries and worries about family members who are still living in conflict situations cause anxiety and stress. Furthermore, participants describe how the uncertainty of the asylum procedure results in negative thoughts and feelings of insecurity, as they have little

future perspective. Based on the conservation of resources theory, the asylum procedure can impact the caravans of resources for refugees and asylum seekers. Resource caravans can be described as a pool of resources in which resources are linked to similar resources. A gain in resources in the same resource caravan can therefore lead to a gain of similar resources. On the other hand, a loss or lack of resources can indicate or cause a lack of other similar resources (Hobfoll, 2010; Kuttikat, 2022). Consequently, this can lead to loss spirals, meaning that a loss of resources leads to the loss of other resources. This leads to more stress (Hobfoll, 2010).

Thus, during the post-migration phase, refugees and asylum seekers often lack resources or a resource-enriching environment, such as safe housing or family. Also, they may perceive a threat of a loss of resources, such as having to return to their country of origin and losing a safe environment. In addition, they have invested in their migration to the Netherlands but can experience a lack of resource gain, as they experience challenges in acculturation and societal domains. As a result, this lack of resources can lead to loss spirals as individuals are less able to deal with other resource losses and lack similar resources. Consequently, refugees and asylum seekers experience post-migration stress, based on the conservation of resources model by Hobfoll (1989).

As participants experience losses of resources and loss spirals in the post-migration phase, exposure to news on current conflicts adds to post-migration stress. After exposure to news on current conflicts, participants experience various negative emotions such as fear, sadness, and hopelessness. Furthermore, exposure to news on current conflicts worsens PTSD symptoms, such as flashbacks and sleeping issues. Using the framework of Hobfoll (1989), exposure to news on current conflicts can be perceived as a threat to the well-being and therefore a threat to the resources of participants. As a threat of a loss of resources or a loss of resources itself can cause stress, exposure to news on current conflicts is a stress factor for refugees and asylum seekers dealing with PTSD.

Due to the effect exposure to the news has on their emotional well-being, refugees and asylum seekers practice different ways of coping. Most participants try to avoid the news in general or the news containing images of conflict situations. Avoidance of “stimuli associated with the traumatic event” (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 271 - 272) is listed as one of the symptoms that individuals with PTSD may experience. Avoidance of exposure to news on current conflicts can thus be a symptom of PTSD, as exposure to news on current conflicts worsens PTSD symptoms. Besides, participants seek distractions such as walking or gardening to cope with feeling lost or having negative thoughts, which is similar to coping strategies employed by refugees and asylum seekers in Germany with PTSD (Rzepka et al., 2022).

While participants share their experience with practitioners at the centre for transcultural psychiatry where they are under treatment, they do not share this with others. For some, this is due to not having people around whom they trust. For others, this is because they do not like to share these experiences with others and want to be alone. Low social well-being and acculturation issues can be considered a common theme among refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands dealing with PTSD.

All participants experience difficulties in forming social relationships and feelings of isolation due to difficulties in trusting others, cultural differences, and language barriers. Furthermore, most participants feel lost or ‘in-between’ countries. Feelings of mistrust are also reported by refugees and asylum seekers with PTSD in Germany (Rzepka et al., 2022). After arrival in the Netherlands, refugees and asylum seekers deal with acculturation. Acculturation can be described as a process by which individuals, for example, migrants, come into contact and develop relationships with different cultures (Madianos, 2010; Tanenbaum et al., 2013). In these acculturation processes, refugees and asylum seekers can employ different strategies that can guide them towards, for example, integration or assimilation (Berry, 1997). Experiencing

difficulties in acculturation processes can impact the mental health of refugees and asylum seekers and lead to acculturation stress (Madianos, 2010; Ünlü Ince et al., 2014).

In addition, difficulties in trusting others and forming social relationships can indicate lower social well-being, as described by Keyes (1998). Coming from eudaimonic traditions, the social well-being theory views individuals as not merely private products but rather as part of society. This includes realizing one's nature and leading a fulfilling life can lead to a higher well-being. The five dimensions of Keyes (1998) are components of social well-being that refer to individuals feeling part of society, feeling valuable to society, wanting to know more about society, seeing potential in society, and having a positive outlook on others by trusting others and thinking others can be kind. Keyes describes this as; "social integration, social contribution, social coherence, social actualization, and social acceptance" (1998, p. 121).

The dimension of 'social acceptance' entails the idea of having a positive outlook on others in which feelings of trust and believing in kindness and industriousness of others, constitute a greater social well-being. Based on this idea, the dimension of social acceptance is low among participants. While participants can have a positive outlook on others in general, they still experience difficulties in trusting others. Some participants state how this is due to the traumatic experiences they have dealt with, for example, traumatic events during their journey to the Netherlands. Besides, a lack of social relationships can indicate a lack of resource-enriching environments, based on the conservation of resources theory by Hobfoll (1989), which can impact the opportunities for gaining resources.

Although participants are negatively affected by the news and try to avoid the news on current conflicts, most participants are still exposed to news on current conflicts, specifically to news on their country of origin. On the other hand, some participants explicitly avoid the news. These participants choose to not watch the news as they distrust the media or want to protect their mental health. On an individual level, participants have different considerations and

motivations that drive the choices they make regarding exposure to news. For some participants, the negative effects of exposure to news on current conflicts lead to complete avoidance of the news in general. For these participants, avoiding the news can be a way to regain resources, such as well-being and peace. Besides, another participant avoids the news as they do not trust the media and feel helpless in conflict situations. This participant found that humans in general are perceived as not valuable and feel that they do not participate in society. This perception can be associated with low social well-being, as the dimensions of social integration, social contribution, and social actualization are low (Keyes, 1998).

Especially the environment of participants plays a role in how participants navigate exposure to news. Participants find it important to stay informed about their country of origin and family residing in other countries. Often, family members of refugees and asylum seekers reside in other countries, sometimes in conflict situations. Therefore, worries, feelings of responsibility or guilt play a role in the day-to-day life of participants. In these instances, the news acts as a source of information and knowledge to keep informed about the safety of family members in conflict situations and to feel useful for family members. Furthermore, one participant is still exposed to news on their country of origin because they are waiting for good news in hopes of returning one day. In this case, the news acts as a source of information, but also hope.

Other influences from the environment of refugees and asylum seekers also influence the exposure to news on current conflicts. Participants describe how these influences from their environment are hard to control. On social media, the social networks of participants share updates on conflict situations from different parts of the world. For example, updates on their country of origin are shared in group chats of family or images of conflicts are shared on Facebook. Furthermore, social media can act as a source of entertainment, but can unwillingly lead to exposure to news on current conflicts. Besides, the direct environment of refugees and asylum seekers, for example, partners, may lead to exposure to news on current conflicts.

Additionally, the news can act as a means to integrate into Dutch society. Despite the challenges refugees and asylum seekers face in the Netherlands, they can be hopeful and have the desire to integrate into Dutch society. Following the news is a way to learn the language of the host country or to learn about the rules and developments in the host country. While following the general news may expose participants to news on current conflicts, they choose to find ways to improve their social well-being. Many participants are working on becoming more social which is reflected in greeting people on the street or having small social interactions. Some participants are learning the Dutch language and learning about the rules and developments in Dutch society. This can be associated with higher social well-being or a desire to improve social well-being, as proposed by Keyes (1998).

Furthermore, reflecting on the conservation of resources model by Hobfoll (1989), efforts to integrate into Dutch society by learning and trying to be more social can be seen as a way to gain resources or create a surplus of resources. Also, this could be seen as a way to replace resources. Learning about Dutch society could be a way to replace resources, such as work, education, or feeling valuable to society. By gaining and creating a surplus of these resources, such as knowledge and hope for the future, refugees and asylum seekers are better able to “offset loss” (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 519) of other resources, and thus experience less stress.

Hence, for refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands dealing with post-migration stress and PTSD, the news can act as a resource or a means to a resource itself. The news can give information about where conflicts and tensions are rising or where a bombing has taken place. By following the news, refugees and asylum seekers may feel that they contribute to the situation of family members or they can experience hope when they receive good news. Furthermore, the news can act as a means to a resource and resource, as refugees and asylum seekers make efforts to integrate into Dutch society. Through the national news, refugees and asylum seekers can learn the Dutch language and learn about current rules and policies to help

them understand Dutch society. Participants share how they are working on learning the Dutch language and trying to be more social. In these cases, participants find it important to feel valuable and part of society and they want to know more about society. Consequently, exposure to news can lead to higher social well-being as it leads to social integration, social contribution, and social coherence (Keyes, 1998).

Thus, refugees and asylum seekers are motivated to either avoid or be exposed to news on current conflicts due to various factors such as acculturation difficulties or post-migration stress factors. While exposure to news on current conflicts can be seen as a post-migration stress factor for refugees and asylum seekers with PTSD due to the negative effects it has on their emotional well-being, it can also act as a resource for integration, feelings of hope, or improvement of social well-being. Exposure to news can both lead to a gain in resources, and therefore a positive well-being, or a loss in resources, and therefore lead to the experience of stress, based on the conservation of resource theory by Hobfoll (1989).

### ***Limitations and Strengths***

The results of this thesis contribute to both the academic discussion on post-migration stress and the clinical practice within transcultural psychiatry. However, there are several limitations of this qualitative research. A few limitations concern the participant recruitment of this study. For this thesis, six interviews have been conducted. Due to limited time to conduct the interviews, there was no possibility to collect more data. Conducting more interviews could have led to more representative results. Besides this, five of the participants are male and one participant is female. This gender distribution among participants makes the results less representative as experiences of acculturation, PTSD symptoms, and exposure to the news might differ for men and women. On the other hand, the included participants are a varied group with diverse experiences. All participants have fled from different countries and different world regions. Furthermore, the interviews show that there are varying experiences when it comes to

living situations. Also, the time of residence in the Netherlands varies among participants, ranging from thirty years to fifteen months. Besides, there is an equal distribution of participants in the asylum procedure and participants with a residence permit.

Another limitation of the study can be found in the data collection process. For four of the interviews, a telephone interpreter was used. The use of an interpreter can influence the answers of the participants and therefore lowers the internal validity of the research and makes it less reproducible. Yet, allowing participants to speak in their own language can ensure that they can share their experiences more easily. The interviews allowed participants to share their experiences in the Netherlands and to probe based on their answers. Because there was a substantial amount of time dedicated to the contextualisation of the experience of the participants, in some cases there was less time to probe on subjects, such as exposure to news and its effect on emotional and social well-being. In these cases, the effect of the exposure to news on current conflicts became less clear.

Additionally, a limitation of this thesis can be found in the research design. Due to limited time and the emic perspective of this research, the research methods did not include a quantitative approach regarding post-migration stress factors or PTSS symptoms. Therefore, the description of challenges and symptoms has been outlined based on the semi-structured interviews during which there was no psychological assessment of these complaints. While the interviews have collected a great amount of data regarding the experiences of the post-migration phase by refugees and asylum seekers, this has only been done qualitatively. A qualitative approach allows the participant to share their experience in their own words. Moreover, they can elaborate on this experience and use their own words to explain the mental health issues they experience and the challenges they have face in the post-migration phase. Yet, based on this qualitative approach, the experience of certain issues or challenges cannot be properly compared with the experience of other participants or other research results.

With a quantitative approach to examining post-migration stress factors and PTSD symptoms, the prevalence of certain issues or challenges can be clarified. Moreover, the extent to which these issues or challenges are seen as limiting or stressful can be outlined. An example of a quantitative approach regarding post-migration stress is the post-migration living problems checklist (PMLP-CL) by Silove et al. (1997). The PMLP-CL was developed to map the post-migration living problems that refugees and asylum seekers experience. Furthermore, an example of a quantitative approach regarding PTSD is the PCL-5 questionnaire that, for example, includes fear of being sent home, worries about family, or delays in processing refugee applications (Silove et al., 1997).

On the other hand, a substantial amount of literature has examined the relationship between post-migration stress and PTSS with a quantitative approach. Therefore, this thesis is embedded in current academic discussions and fills the gap with a qualitative approach to this topic. Furthermore, the diagnosis of PTSS has been confirmed by practitioners of the participants and can therefore be regarded as reliable. Furthermore, the description that participants gave regarding their symptoms aligns with the symptoms described by the DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The interviews showed how these symptoms or challenges affected other areas of their life, such as sleep or social contact. Besides, during the interviews, participants were asked about their experience with several post-migration stress categories, such as the asylum process, socio-economic, and social and interpersonal domains (Li et al., 2016). Moreover, participants could describe their symptoms in their own words which added to the emic perspective of this research and allowed for the contextualisation of the findings. Thus, the qualitative research design ensured that exposure to news on current conflicts could be contextualised and understood as participants were able to share their experiences. Furthermore, due to the qualitative approach, themes were found inductively enhancing and elaborating on the findings of this research.

## ***Recommendations***

Based on the findings and limitations of this thesis, a few recommendations can be made for future research. A recommendation for future research is to further explore this topic with a mixed methods approach, in which the quantitative approach can support the conduct of interviews. Based on conducting questionnaires such as the PMLP-CL or PCL-5, which can be used as a checklist for PTSD according to the DSM-5 (NTVP, 2023), the reported symptoms and challenges of the research population can be contextualised by conducting interviews.

Additionally, in future studies, it is recommended to explore the perception of the media of refugees and asylum seekers and the relation this has to social well-being. Social well-being plays a role in different aspects of the post-migration phase of refugees and asylum seekers. In this thesis, the perception of refugees and asylum seekers in the media was not taken into account during the development of the research design and the literature review. While questions were asked about the effect of exposure to the news on current conflicts on their social well-being, the effect of their social well-being on exposure to news on current conflicts was not taken into consideration. However, the influence of perception on the media and the social well-being of participants became apparent inductively during the interviews. For some participants, the media can be seen as unreliable, as the news is perceived as propaganda or a way to spread lies. Because of this, the news might be avoided. Furthermore, social well-being influences the coping strategies refugees and asylum seekers employ when dealing with negative emotions. Hence, social well-being and the perception of the research population on the media influence their behaviour.

Shedding light on the social well-being of refugees and asylum seekers not only gives insights into their coping strategies or support network, it also gives insights into their perspective on society as a whole. Consequently, it gives insight into the acculturation process and perception of refugees and asylum seekers on integrating into Dutch society. The various

motivations and influences in the environment of refugees and asylum seekers detail how considerations are made regarding exposure to news on current conflicts on an individual level.

In conclusion, this thesis has detailed how refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands dealing with PTSD navigate exposure to news on current conflicts, based on the effect it has on their well-being and the post-migration context they exist. Influenced by various factors, such as acculturation, worries about family members, and perspectives on the future, refugees and asylum seekers are motivated to either avoid or be exposed to news on current conflicts. While exposure to stress can be seen as a stress factor for refugees and asylum seekers with PTSD, it can also act as a resource for integration, feelings of hope, or improvement of social well-being.

Utilizing the conservation of resources theory by Hobfoll (1989) and the well-being theories by Diener and Ryan (2009) and Keyes (1998) has given insight into how the environments of refugees and asylum seekers dealing with PTSD can contribute to or undermine their well-being. In these contexts, there is a complex interplay of post-migration stress and exposure to news on current conflicts. Exposure to news on current conflicts can both lead to a gain in resources, and therefore a positive well-being, or a loss in resources, and therefore add to post-migration stress. It has become clear that considerations regarding emotional and social well-being are made on an individual level. Some participants find that the news can be a resource to improve social well-being, while others choose to avoid the news for a higher emotional well-being. Limitations of this research are the small group of participants and the gender imbalance among participants, as only one female is included. Based on this research and its limitations, it is recommended to include a mixed methods approach in future studies on this topic. Besides this, the influence of social well-being and perception on media should be further researched to create a further understanding of the role of news among refugees and asylum seekers.

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<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-014-0252-5>

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Non-WMO Statement

P.O. Box 30 001, 9700 RB Groningen, The Netherlands

**University Medical Center Groningen**

**Medical Ethics Review Board**

To  
A. Visser-Nieraeth, Ph.D.  
University of Groningen  
[a.visser-nieraeth@rug.nl](mailto:a.visser-nieraeth@rug.nl)

Phone (050) 361 4204  
Fax (050) 361 4351  
Email metc@umcg.nl  
Website <http://metcgroningen.nl>

Enclosure(s) --  
Ref M24.330146

Date 21 March 2024  
METc number METc 2024/190  
Title **Exposure to news on conflicts and post-migration stress: the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands dealing with PTSD.**

The Medical Ethics Review Board of the University Medical Center Groningen (METc UMCG) has discussed the above mentioned protocol and considered whether or not the research falls within the scope of the Medical Research Involving Human Subjects Act (WMO).

Based on the submitted documents the METc UMCG concludes that the above mentioned protocol is not a clinical research with human subjects as meant in the Medical Research Involving Human Subjects Act (WMO).

Furthermore, the committee has concluded that the proposed research does not fall within the scope of the Medical Device Regulation (MDR, EU 2017/745) or Clinical Trial Regulation (CTR, EU 536/2014).

Therefore the METc UMCG has no task in reviewing the protocol and you do not need a full review or approval before you can start the research.

Please note that other legal Acts and/or guidelines, such as the Medical Treatment Agreement (WGBO), Dutch Personal Data Protection Act (Wpb) and codes of conduct of the FEDERA (Federation of Medical Scientific Institutions) may apply to the scientific research.

Kind regards,  
on behalf of the Medical Ethics Review Board

prof. H.P.H. Kremer, MD Ph.D.  
chairman

J. Davids, MSc  
official secretary

cc:  
- [a.w.kooymans@student.rug.nl](mailto:a.w.kooymans@student.rug.nl)

# هل تشاهد الأخبار حول الصراع؟

## ماذا يفعل ذلك بك؟

المشاركة في بحث

العملية

مشاركتك

الهدف من البحث

أولاً سوف تتلقى خطاب معلومات عن البحث. إذا وافقت، سوف توقع. بعد ذلك سنقوم بتحديد موعد للمقابلة

لكي تشارك بتجربتك، ستشارك في مقابلة واحدة مدتها من 60 إلى 90 دقيقة

البحث عن ما هو تأثير مشاهدة الأخبار حول الصراعات عليك

### هل أنت مهتم أو هل لديك أسئلة؟ معلومات الاتصال

+31 6 57807627

ans.kooymans@ggzdrenthe.nl

# Nieuws kijken over conflicten

## Wat doet dat met je?

Meedozen aan onderzoek



Doel  
onderzoek

Onderzoeken welk effect het kijken van nieuws over conflicten heeft op jouw welzijn.



Jouw bijdrage

Om jouw ervaring te delen, neem je deel aan één interview van 60 tot 90 min.



Proces

Voordat je meedoet, krijg je een informatiebrief. Als je akkoord gaat, zet je een handtekening. Daarna maken we een afspraak voor een interview.

Interesse of vragen?

Neem contact op met Ans Koymans:



+31 6 57807627



[ans.koymans@ggzdrenthe.nl](mailto:ans.koymans@ggzdrenthe.nl)

# Watching news about conflicts

## What does that do with you?

Participating in research



Research goal



Your contribution



Process

Investigate what effect watching news about conflicts has on your well-being.

To share your experience, you will participate in one interview of 60 to 90 minutes.

First, you will receive an information letter. If you agree, you sign. We will then make an appointment for an interview.

Are you interested or do you have questions?

Contact Ans Koymans:



+31 6 57807627



[ans.koymans@ggzdrenthe.nl](mailto:ans.koymans@ggzdrenthe.nl)

## **Appendix C: Informed Consent**

### **Information for participation in master thesis research**

## **Exposure to news on conflicts and post-migration stress**

The experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands dealing with PTSD

Dear Madam, Sir,

I invite you to participate in research on your experiences regarding exposure to news about conflicts. You are receiving this letter because you are treated at the [REDACTED] for mental health problems, including post-traumatic stress disorder. Participation in this research is voluntary. To allow you to participate, we need your written permission.

Before you decide whether you want to participate in this study, you will receive an explanation of what the study entails. Read this information carefully and ask the researcher for an explanation if you have any questions. You can also talk about participating in the study with your partner, friends or family.

#### **1. General information**

This research is being carried out by Ans Kooymans, a master's student at the University of Groningen. Participants are required for this study. This research has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the University Medical Centre Groningen.

#### **2. Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this research is to give insight into the effect of exposure to news on conflicts on your wellbeing. With this, I hope to give insight into the relation between post-migration stress and exposure to news on conflicts. This might help you personally to see the effects of watching the news on your wellbeing. Besides, it might help practitioners at the [REDACTED] to gain insight into your wellbeing and perhaps improve mental health care.

#### **3. What it means to participate**

To investigate the effects of watching news on current conflicts, you will be asked to do one interview. This interview will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes. We will talk about your experience when watching images of conflicts that are currently taking place around the world. If you do not speak the Dutch or English language well, an interpreter in your language of preference will be there. The interview will take place face-to-face, preferably at the [REDACTED].

Please let me know if you cannot come to our appointment. You do not have to give the reason. If you still want to participate in the research, we will make a new appointment. If your contact details change, please let me know.

#### **4. Possible side effects or adverse effects**

It is important that you take some time to think about participating. During the interview we will discuss your experiences when watching news on current conflicts. This may include negative emotions that might be uncomfortable to share. The research aims to provide insight into the effect of watching news on current conflicts on your wellbeing. When participating, the interview will take around 60 to 90 minutes. Besides, you might have to travel for the appointment. The costs of traveling will not be paid for.

#### **5. If you don't want to participate or want to stop the study**

You decide whether you want to participate in the study. Participation is voluntary. This means that you can withdraw from the research at any time. If you change your mind after the interview, you can contact me, your interview and data will then be deleted. You do not have to give a reason for why you do not want to participate or why you want to withdraw. If you do not want to participate, this will not affect your treatment at [REDACTED].

#### **6. End of the investigation**

Your participation in the study will end:

- After the interview is completed
- If you choose to stop yourself
- If your practitioner thinks it is better for you to stop
- If I, the researcher, thinks it is better for you to stop
- [REDACTED], the government or the Medical Ethical Committee of the University of Groningen decides to stop the research

The entire study will end when all participants have completed the interview and the data has been analyzed. The estimated completion time of the thesis is in July 2024. The results and data will not be changed after the completion of the thesis. After processing all the data, the researcher will inform you about the most important results of the study. This will happen within about 2 months after the thesis is completed.

#### **7. Use and storage of your data**

To do this research, your personal data will be collected and stored. This concerns data such as your name, address, age, and data about your health. During the data collection, your personal data will be stored in a document that I can only access. The data from the interview will be separated from your personal data, such as your name and address. I will handle the data about your health carefully and confidentially. To conduct the research, I ask permission for the use of your data.

##### **Confidentiality of your data**

To guarantee your privacy, your personal data will be linked to a randomized code. The data from the interview will only be linked to this randomized code. Your name and other personal data that can be traced back to your identity are stored separately. The randomized code remains accessible only to the researcher at all times. In the thesis, your personal data is not mentioned.

## **Storage and use of your data**

For the MA thesis, your data used for the research will be stored for the legally prescribed periods, that is 7 years. Personal data such as names and addresses are not stored.

## **Retention and use of data for other research**

After this research, your data will not be accessible for future studies.

## **Withdraw permission**

You can always withdraw your consent to the processing of your data in this research. If you have already completed the interview you can request that your data will be deleted.

## **More information about your rights when processing data**

For more information about respecting your rights when processing your personal data, please contact the person responsible for processing your personal data. For this investigation, [REDACTED] is responsible for compliance with the rules for the processing of your personal data.

You can also contact the institution's Data Protection Officer (See Appendix A). More information about your rights with regard to the processing of your personal data can be found on the website of the Dutch Data Protection Authority (<https://autoriteitpersoonsgegevens.nl/nl/onderwerpen/avg-nieuwe-europese-privacy> Legislation/Control-over-je-data).

## **8. Insurance for test subjects**

An insurance policy has been taken out for everyone who participates in this study. The insurance covers damage caused by the investigation. Not all damage is covered. In **Appendix B** you will find more information about the insurance. It also states who you can report the damage to.

## **9. Compensation for participating**

You will not receive payment for participating in this study.

## **Do you have questions?**

If you have any questions, please contact me, Ans Koymans. You can also contact your practitioner at [REDACTED] if you have any questions. In the event of complaints, it is best to contact the Complaints Officer (klachtenfunctionaris) [REDACTED]. All information can be found in Appendix A: contact details.

## **10. Signing consent form**

You have a maximum of seven days to consider participation, after this period I will contact you to ask if you want to participate. However, if you think you have had sufficient time to consider participation before this, you can already contact me to participate. If you give permission, we will ask you to confirm this in writing on the accompanying statement of consent. By your written consent, you indicate that you have understood the information and agree to participate in the study.

The signature sheet is kept safe by the researcher. You will receive a copy or a second copy of this declaration of consent.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Ans Kooymans  
MA Student Religion, Conflict & Globalization at the University of Groningen

**Attachments**

- A. Contact Details
- B. Information about the insurance
- C. Consent Form

## **Appendix A: Contact details**

Researcher

Ans Kooymans

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

### **Complaints**

If you have a complaint about the course of the investigation, you can report this to the principal investigator. If you do not want this, you can contact the independent complaints officer via:

[REDACTED]

### **Ethics Committee Psychology University of Groningen**

If you have a complaint about the research and you have not reached an agreement with the researcher, you can contact the official secretary of the Medical Ethical Committee of the University Medical Center Groningen via [metc@umcg.nl](mailto:metc@umcg.nl).

### **Data protection and rights**

If you have any questions about the protection of your personal data at [REDACTED], you can send an email to: [REDACTED]). For more information about your rights, please email: [REDACTED]

For more information, see website: [REDACTED]

## **Appendix B: information about the insurance**

[REDACTED] has taken out insurance for everyone who participates in this study. The insurance covers damage caused by participating in the study. The amount for which the insurance has been taken out is a maximum of € 650.000 for the total damage that has occurred to test subjects per insurance year during all research carried out by [REDACTED], a maximum of € 7,500,000 for the total damage in this case.

The insurance is taken out with:

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

If you have suffered or suspect damage, you must immediately contact [REDACTED] and follow her instructions.

## Appendix C: Participant Consent Form

### **Exposure to new conflicts and post-migration stress:**

### ***The experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands dealing with PTSD***

I have read the information letter. I could also ask questions. My questions have been sufficiently answered. I had plenty of time to decide whether to participate.

I know that taking part is voluntary. I also know that I can decide at any time not to participate. I do not have to give a reason for this and this will not affect my care or treatment.

I know that for the purposes of the investigation, the researcher will need my personal data. Information of the researcher are listed in this information letter. I give permission for that access.

I give permission for the collection and use of my data in the manner and for the purposes stated in the information letter.

I want to participate in this research.

Participant Name:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date : \_\_ / \_\_ / \_\_

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I declare that I have fully informed this subject about the study.

If information becomes known during the study that could influence the subject's consent, I will inform him/her in good time.

Name of researcher (or his representative):

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_ / \_\_ / \_\_

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*The participant will receive a complete information letter, together with a copy of the signed consent form.*

## Appendix D: Interview Guide

### Introduction

My name is Ans and I am studying in Groningen and therefore I am conducting research. This research focusses on watching news on current conflicts and what effect that has on you. This can help the people working here, but also you, to gain insight into the effect. During this interview I will ask about you and your current situation, and your experience with watching news on current conflicts. It will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes. If you want to have a break, just let me know. Also if you are uncomfortable, let me know.

Before we start, I want to ask you if I can record this interview. I need it to transcribe the interview, but I will be the only one who listens to it. When the research is completed, I will delete the audio.

Can I record?

### Social demographic data

To start, can you tell me a little bit about yourself?

*Probe questions: How old are you? Where were you born? What did you do in your country of origin?*

### Post-migration context

Can you tell me a little bit about your life at this moment?

How long have you been in the Netherlands?

*Probe: What do you think of the Netherlands?*

Do you sometimes feel like you don't belong here?

*Probe: Do you experience discrimination? How is that for you?*

Do you have a permit?

*If yes; Since when?*

*If not; how do you experience the asylum procedure?*

What is your current living situation?

What is your family situation?

*Do you worry about them? Why?*

What does your life look like on a daily basis?

*How do you like doing...? Why?*

Is there anything you worry about at the moment?

*Why?*

### Way of exposure

So now I know a little bit more about you and your situation, and now we will further talk about watching news on current conflicts.

Do you sometimes watch news on current conflicts?

*Why (not)?*

*Probe: Is this important for you?*

Do you watch the news to know more about the world?

Do you understand the world better after watching the news on current conflicts?

*Why (not)?*

*If you don't watch the news anymore, do you sometimes still see images of current conflicts?*

*E.g. on social media or TV?*

*If you do watch the news on current conflicts, do you look it up online or on TV?*

*Why (not)?*

### If there is exposure to news on current conflicts

Which conflicts do you mostly see?

Where do you mostly see these images?

*On which channels?*

*E.g. local/national/country of origin/social media*

What kind of images are these?

*E.g. hurt people?*

How often do you see these images?

When do you see these images? *Why?*

Do you watch these images together with other people?

*If yes, how often and when do you watch it with others?*

*If not, why?*

*Probe: Would you like to watch it with other people? Why?*

### Effects on emotional well-being

How do you feeling when watching the news on conflicts?

*Why do you think you feel like this?*

*Probe: Can you elaborate on these emotions? E.g. are they positive or negative?*

Are you satisfied with life when watching the news on current conflicts?

If you don't watch it, does it give you stress?

*Why?*

What do you do when you have these emotions?

*Why?*

*(E.g. talk to people about these images, talk to people about your feelings, wandelen)*

*Probe: Does this help?*

*Probe: What do you need when you have watched the news on ...? Why?*

### **Effects on social wellbeing**

So the news has effect on your emotions, but it can also affect your social wellbeing. In the next part we will talk more about the influence of the news on current conflicts on your social situation.

If you have watched the news on conflicts, do you feel like you can share your feelings with others? *Why (not)?*

*Probe: would you like to talk about it with others?*

*If you talk to other about the news: why is this important to you?*

Do you talk with others about the news on conflicts?

*Probe: Is that also a reason for you to watch it?*

Do people in your environment watch the news on ... (the same images you see)?

If you (not) have seen the images of [...], do you feel like you belong?

Do you feel like you participate in society if you have (not) watched the news on [...]?

Do you feel like you are socially accepted if you (don't) watch the news?

If you have watched the news on conflicts, how do you think of other people?

*Probe: Has something changed in your trust in others? Is this because of watching the news?*

Do you feel like you contribute to society if you have watched the news on conflicts?

If you have watched the news on conflicts, do you feel like you can change something in society?

Is there anything you would like to add or do you have questions?

**Thank you for your time**