

Title: Communication technology and the concept of home: a comparison of qualitative methods
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Stream: Global wellbeing
Abstract:

Introduction

Communication technology influences daily life at home amidst family but also away from home. Possibly not only in practical matters but also in ideas of what at home is, feelings of connectedness while being away. An example: a labour migrant who stays in touch with the family back home by means of e-mail and Skype, and who remains part of the decision-making structure of that family.

The present study addresses an issue of increasing societal relevance in this technological era with huge workers mobility. It aims to add to the knowledge base on migrants' perceptions of home and will contribute to the research agenda of Home Economics. In addition it will help identify the strengths and weaknesses of different (systematic) qualitative data analysis methods.

Aim

The aim of the present study is twofold: To explore the role of communication technology in the perception migrants have of home and their roles "at home". In addition, different methods of qualitative data analysis (membership categorization analysis, domain analysis and metaphor analysis) are compared with respect to their relative added value to one another.

Methods

Data was collected by means of semi-structured interviews with highly educated migrants, graduate students as well as university staff at Wageningen University. This target group was chosen because they are expected to be able to express their thoughts in English (as all graduate courses are taught in English), and this group has easy access to communication technology. To be eligible, an interviewee has to have a partner and/or children, either in their home country or in Wageningen. Interviews were held in the English language.

In the semi-structured interviews, respondents were asked to describe their home, the ways they stay in contact with their family in their country of origin, and their sense of connectedness and roles in the family structure. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed.

Different methods of qualitative data analysis were applied: membership categorization, domain analysis and metaphor analysis, using Atlas.ti, Computer-Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software.

Results and conclusions

Preliminary analyses suggest that communication technology facilitates staying part of a distant home and being involved in daily decision making. The different data analysis methods lead to different code schemes, and enrich the insights in the collected data.