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**Getting the right job: A qualitative
analysis of highly-skilled
refugees' integration into
the Norwegian Labour Market.**

By

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

First and foremost, I would like to thank the Almighty God for guiding me to the completion of my master's degree, which is yet another significant academic milestone. He is undoubtedly the best dependant and planner. Secondly, special thanks to my thesis supervisor and lecturer, Professor Mai Camilla Munkejord for her assistance and guidance in getting my thesis finished. She is substantially responsible for helping me climb this new rung on the academic ladder through coaching, empowerment, motivation, inspiration, and oversight.

I am incredibly appreciative of your kindness, encouragement, and inspiration in addition to your help and counsel during the research. Anytime I encountered a problem with my research or writing, she was always open and available to help me out. I am sincerely grateful for the opportunity to have you as both my lecturer and supervisor.

I want to thank the Head of the Department of Inter-cultural Studies at NLA University College (NLA Høgskolen), Associate Professor, Solveig Omland, and all lectures in the school for their support throughout these years. I am grateful to my parents, siblings, extended family, and friends for their unwavering support during this journey abroad. I am also grateful to the academic and selection board for providing me admission to achieve one of the many childhood dreams of schooling abroad to deepen my knowledge and understanding.

I will always be grateful for the compassion and support I received from the many amazing coursemates from different continents I was fortunate enough to meet during my time at NLA University College.

Your comments of inspiration and support made my time in Bergen, Norway, memorable from the very beginning. I want to express my gratitude to my friend, Selina Budua Quainoo, and her lovely husband, Joshua Tetteh Ocansey, who together with their family have made Bergen feel like a second home. A special thanks also go to Atta Dabone Twumasi Snr. & Jnr. for their motivation, inspiration, and immense support towards this journey in Norway.

Additionally, I also want to express my gratitude to everyone who agreed to take part in this study since without their enthusiastic support and participation, data gathering would not have been possible, thank you for agreeing to take part in this study and for their willingness to share accurate and timely information to enrich this study.

Without question, my time at NLA University College, Bergen, Norway has been the most beneficial to my academic career. Thank you, Norway.

ABSTRACT

Despite the numerous efforts by the Norwegian government to ensure that refugees are fully integrated into the Norwegian labour market, highly-skilled refugees still face many challenges in their job search. This study is to explore the experiences of highly-skilled refugees who have obtained a well-paid job in the Norwegian labour market as part of their integration to deepen our understanding of what influences the labour market integration in Norway among this particular group. It also looked at the difficulties they face in finding work or jobs. The qualitative research design was chosen as the research methodology for this project because it enabled the researcher to conduct more in-depth semi-structured interviews on the subject under study. The study was informed by the Structuration Theory, Human Capital Theory, Social Capital Theory and Integration Theory. The research findings indicate that the use of family, friends and networks was crucial for refugees to obtain paid employment as part of their integration into the Norwegian labour market and society at large. The study also revealed that skilled refugees are not usually able to achieve their childhood aspirations or profession upon their arrival in Norway. Refugees who gain employment experience a sense of merit, self-esteem and belonging as well as a sense of integration into Norwegian society. The findings of this study also showed that finding employment is often difficult for refugees and immigrants with refugee backgrounds due to a lack of networks, racism or discrimination, language barriers, non-acceptance of foreign academic credentials, and lack of experience in the labour market, to name a few. Furthermore, not all people with refugee histories who obtained paid employment encounter the same challenges with employment as a tool for integration. To be empowered and integrated into the Norwegian labour market and society, skilled refugees accept that employment is a goal.

KEYWORDS

Integration, Refugee, Network, Employment, Friends, Family, Immigration, Socialization, Empowerment, Language, Labour Market, Culture, Norwegian, English and Voluntarism.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this Master's thesis to my family.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

EU - European Union
IMDI - The Directorate of Integration and Diversity
ILO - International Labour Organization
IOM - The International Organization for Migration
IRC - International Rescue Committee
IYV - International Year of Volunteers
MPI - Migration Policy Institute
NAV - Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration
NGO - None Governmental Organization
NRC - The Norwegian Refugee Council
NSD - Norwegian Center for Research Data
OECD - The Organization of Economic and Development
RCOA - Refugee Council of Australia
SSB - Statistics Norway
UDI - Norwegian Directorate of Immigration
UN - United Nations
UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USA - United States of America

DECLARATION

I, Abednego Akwasi Asante Asiedu, hereby declare that this master's thesis, titled «Getting the right job: A qualitative analysis of Highly-skilled Refugees' Integration into the Norwegian labour market », is my original work. I also want to emphasize that I have not submitted this thesis to any other university or educational institution other than the NLA University College, Norway.

Place:
Bergen, Norway

Signature:
Abednego Akwasi Asante Asiedu

Date:
May 2023

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Influx of Refugees

The influx of refugees to Norway and other developed countries has increased significantly in recent years and as a result, the issue of refugee integration has become a major concern for policymakers, employers and society at large (Brochmann & Hagelund, 2011). Many nations around the world, including Norway, are becoming increasingly concerned about the problem of refugee assimilation into the job market.

The number of refugees and family reunions living in Norway in 2020, according to Statistics Norway, was above 240,000 (Statistics Norway, 2021). According to Statistics Norway (SSB), at the beginning of 2023, Norway's population is 5.5 million (5,500,000). Therefore, 240,000 refugees and their family reunions living in Norway is approximately 4.3636% of 5,500,000. The long-term economic and social integration of refugees, as well as the development and expansion of the nation's economy, depends on their successful integration into the labour market (OECD, 2018).

Yet, there are many obstacles that make it difficult for refugees to enter the workforce, including language barriers, a lack of formal education, and discrimination (Fossati & Hagen, 2018). Following these trends, the Norwegian government has put in place a number of laws and measures to make it easier for refugees to integrate into the labour market, including offering language classes, vocational training and financial help to firms that take on refugees (Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity, 2019). Refugees continue to struggle to find a foothold in the local labour markets in Norway despite full legal access to the labour market and significant integration efforts at different public levels (Lens et al., 2019). Thus, even among refugees who have completed the introduction programme, the labour market inclusion rate remains significantly lower than among natives (Djuve and Grødem, 2014).

The integration of refugees into society and notably their integration into labour markets, has long been a major concern for European politicians, academics, and civil society, particularly during the past few decades (Garapich, 2008). Although Mestheneos and Ioannidis (2002) assert that immigration became a problem in Europe as early as 1945, current experiences on the continent have never been so overpowering and difficult. Fasani (2016) also claims that immigration and unemployment are among the top concern for Europe's politics and policymakers. The lack of understanding of integration objectives in Europe, despite increased

political discussion and debate as well as academic research, is partly attributable, according to Hernes (2018), to Europe's lack of readiness to deal with the recent extraordinary surge of refugees. Moreover, indigenous ethnic and religious minorities, whether in daily life or in the job market, continue to pose significant challenges for the European Union (Constant & Zimmermann, 2013).

Although not a member of the EU, Norway somewhat shares the same priorities and difficulties as other European nations when it comes to the situation of refugee integration generally and their successful integration in the Norwegian labour market specifically.

The Norwegian government places a high priority on the participation of all citizens in the labour market as a whole as it is a welfare state that is primarily funded by taxes paid by its working residents (Eriksen, 2013). Valenta (2008) claims that workforce integration is at the core of most integration-related discussions in Norway's socio-political debates.

Some scholars, such as (Banik, 2015; Bloch, 2007; Blom, 2004; Godøy, 2017; Heilbrunna, Kushnirovichb, & Zeltzer-Zubida, 2010; Lundborg, 2013; Poutvaara and Wech, 2016; Valenta, 2008; Zimmermann et al., 2007) describe the labour market integration as the foundation of overall successful integration of all ethnic minorities, including refugees. Thus, for complete integration of minority groups into society, they contend, it is essential to offer employment possibilities, ensure access to jobs and uphold equitable employment standards.

The importance of paid employment to obtain integration among immigrants in Sweden is emphasized by Banik (2015). According to Bloch (2007), employment is essential for refugees' effective integration and emphasizes the connection between refugees, work, and the welfare state. In Blom's (2004) investigation of the integration of immigrants into the Danish job market, obstacles and limitations were noted. Godøy (2017) looks at the job trajectories of refugees in Norway as well as integration measures and labour market integration. In their 2010 study, Heilbronn, Kushnirovich, and Zeltzer-Zubida looked into what influences immigrants' absorption into the Israeli labour market. The integration of immigrants into the Swedish job market is examined by Lundborg (2013). Overall, these studies provide insights into the importance of paid employment for immigrant integration, the challenges faced by immigrants, and the effectiveness of integration measures and policies. Exploring these questions further could contribute to a better understanding of successful strategies for immigrant integration into the labour markets of different countries and inform future research in this area.

Poutvaara and Wech (2016) in similar research investigated the migration patterns and factors that influence returnees in Estonia and Latvia. Additionally, the importance of employment in the integration process is highlighted in Valenta's (2008) analysis of Austria's immigration and

integration strategies. In their 2007 investigation of the factors influencing German immigration policy, Zimmermann et al. noted the significance of labour market demands in policymaking. Overall, the authors contend that the successful integration of ethnic minorities, including refugees, is strongly influenced by labour market integration. Societies can assist minority groups in integrating and contributing to the economy while also creating social cohesion by giving access to employment opportunities and advocating fair employment practices.

The Labour Market Integration Process

More people are currently displaced from their homes by war and conflict than ever before (Hynie 2018 p265). Refugees across the world experience a number of challenges when trying to obtain paid employment in a new host country. Some challenges facing refugees include post-traumatic experiences, work experience, social, psychological, and cultural differences, low level of education, language learning, discrimination, racism, loneliness, lack of self-esteem, lack of social network and others.

According to a Norwegian Official Report (Norwegian: Norges offentlige utredninger, NOU), many adult refugees have qualifications that are significantly below the average of the majority population and have relatively little involvement in education or other training [...] the qualification among refugees do not appear to be greatly valued in the Norwegian job market and individuals educated in Norway have a higher rate of employment than individuals with the same level of education from abroad (NOU 2017 p7).

In Norway, the unemployment rates among refugees are substantially higher than among other migrant groups such as labour migrants and family migrants', according to Statistics Norway, in 2020, more than half of the refugees in Norway had a primary and lower secondary school education. Therefore, low or little relevant competence is an important reason for a lower proportion of employment among immigrants and especially refugees (SSB 2020)

The unemployment rates are highest among refugees with low or no formal education and who, in addition, have difficulties learning the Norwegian language (Helia, S. 2022 p40)

Some refugees, however, are in a different position; they have a university degree when they settle in Norway, and in addition, they speak English. Speaking English is an advantage when settling in Norway as English is increasingly becoming the "lingua franca" in many workplace contexts in Norway. This is for instance the case in cafés and restaurants, in tourism (e.g., hotels, cruise ships, museums), in the construction business as well as in academia.

A number of immigrants encountered difficulties advancing their circumstances to find employment in the Norwegian labour market; those who originated outside the Scandinavian region (more than half of the immigrants came from outside Europe) appeared to have more challenges than those who originated within Scandinavia in advancing their circumstances and having their education or prior experience acknowledged (Fossland, 2013 pg. 278).

According to (Batnitzky & McDowell 2011), in some cases, degrees awarded outside Norway were disregarded in another respect, as during their requalification period the migrants had only secured unskilled work, and in one case, work that no other Norwegian workers wanted to do (Batnitzky & McDowell's, 2011).

Who is a Refugee or what is the definition of the term “Refugee”?

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), a refugee is a person who is forced to flee their country of origin due to persecution, war, or violence, and has a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2021). An individual who has been compelled to leave their country due to persecution, war, or violence is referred to as a refugee by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). According to Article 1 of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, a refugee is someone who has fled his or her country “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion,” is outside the country of his/her nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail him/herself of the protection of that country (1951 Convention on Status of Refugees).

Historical and Contextual Background of Refugees

In order to put things into proper perspective and also to make readers appreciate the research topic and questions, it was also necessary to explore the origins of the refugee crisis.

The history of refugees dates back to ancient times when people were forced to flee their homes due to war, persecution, or natural disasters. The modern history of refugees began in the 20th century when the First World War caused large-scale displacement of people in Europe. In 1921, the League of Nations created the High Commissioner for Refugees to provide assistance and protection to refugees. This was the first international response to the refugee crisis. (Betts, 2013). During World War II, millions of people were displaced or killed in Europe, including millions of Jews who were targeted for extermination by the Nazi regime. This event led to the

creation of the United Nations and the adoption of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (Goodwin-Gill, 2008). The Cold War era saw the emergence of large refugee populations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America due to conflicts and political instability. The United States and other Western countries provided assistance to refugees from communist countries (Loescher & Milner, 2011).

The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees was adopted as a result of this event, which also saw the founding of the United Nations. Goodwin-Gill (2008). Conflicts and political unrest throughout the Cold War era led to the growth of sizable refugee populations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Assistance was given to refugees from communist nations by the United States and other Western nations (2009). Loescher and Milner (2011)

Millions of people in Africa were displaced as a result of the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. Also, the breakup of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s led to a series of ethnic conflicts, notably in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Kosovo. These conflicts resulted in widespread violence, ethnic cleansing, and displacement, leading to a large number of refugees. Moreover, Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan have experienced prolonged conflicts and wars, including the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), the Iraq War (2003-2011) and the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan (since 2001). These conflicts have caused massive displacement, with millions of people fleeing their homes and seeking refuge in neighbouring countries or beyond. Additionally, Somalia has faced protracted political instability, civil war and insurgency since the collapse of its central government in 1991. The ongoing conflict, combined with severe drought and famine, has caused significant displacement and forced many Somalis to seek refuge in neighbouring countries and beyond. Similarly, Eritrea has faced internal conflicts and political repression for several decades. The country's mandatory and indefinite military conscription has been a major driver of displacement, with many Eritreans fleeing the country to escape human rights abuses and seek asylum in other nations. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been plagued by a complex web of conflicts involving armed groups, regional tensions, and political instability. These conflicts have caused widespread violence, human rights abuses, and displacement, making the DRC one of the largest sources of refugees in Africa. Liberia experienced a series of civil wars and political instability between 1989 and 2003. The conflicts resulted in large-scale displacement and forced many Liberians to become refugees, seeking safety in neighbouring countries or further afield. Nepal faced a decade-long Maoist insurgency from 1996 to 2006, resulting in significant internal displacement. Additionally, political instability, natural disasters, and economic challenges have contributed to migration and displacement within and outside of Nepal. The Sri Lankan Civil War (1983-

2009) between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) caused immense suffering and displacement, particularly affecting the Tamil population. The conflict ended with a large-scale military operation and led to a significant number of Tamils seeking refuge in other countries. The Rohingya, a Muslim ethnic minority group in Myanmar, have faced decades of persecution and discrimination. In 2017, a military crackdown led to a mass exodus of Rohingya refugees to neighbouring Bangladesh, creating one of the world's largest refugee crises. These conflicts and situations have resulted in significant refugee populations across the world.

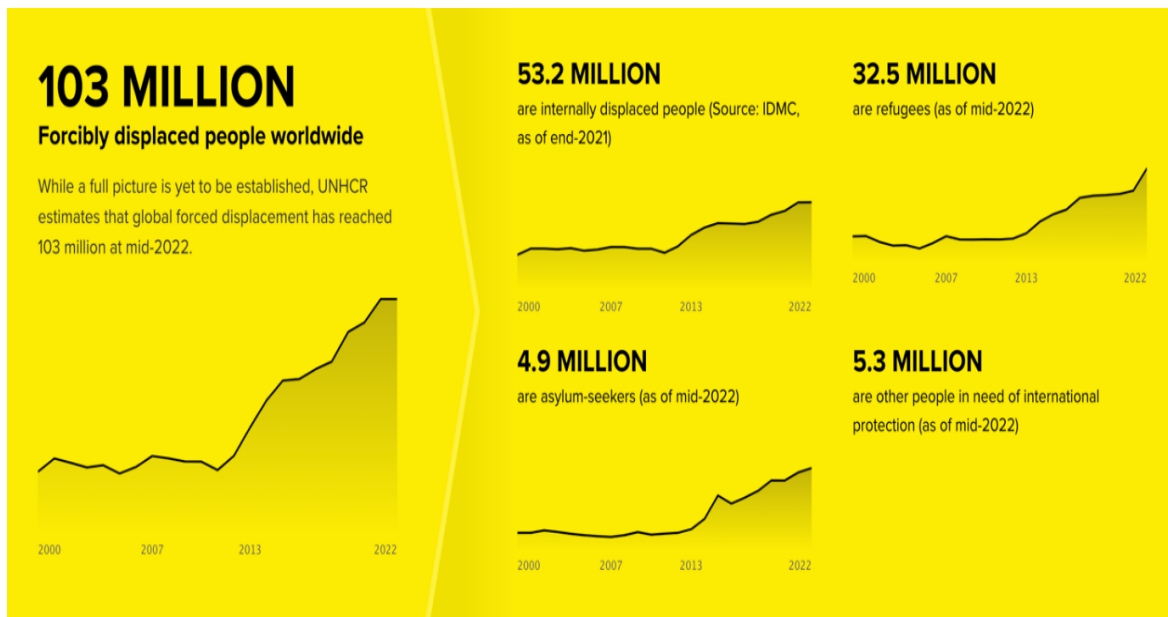
By failing to act to stop the genocide and not doing enough to help the refugees, the international community has come under fire. 1995's Malkki. One of the biggest refugee crises in history has been brought on by the millions of individuals who have been displaced by the Syrian civil conflict since 2011. In addition to finding a long-term solution to the conflict, the international community has failed to adequately aid the refugees. (UNHCR, 2019).

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) recent report, as of mid-June 2022 the number of forcibly displaced people worldwide was estimated at 103 million. This figure according to UNHCR encompasses refugees (including refugees who are not covered by UNHCR's mandate), asylum-seekers, internally displaced people and other people in need of international protection. (UNHCR mid-year trends 2022 report).

The UNHCR report further said the eruption of war in Ukraine following the Russian invasion in February 2022 led to the fastest outflow of refugees since the second world war.

The number of Ukrainian refugees grew 200-fold from some 27,300 at the end of 2021 to more than 5.4 million, hosted in 67 countries, by mid-2022. Some 2.9 million Ukrainian refugees were hosted in countries neighbouring Ukraine, with a further 2.5 million in other European countries (UNHCR mid-year trends 2022 report).

Table 1: UNHCR’s global Refugee Population Statistics Database as at mid-2022.



Source: (UNHCR, 2023)

Refugees Phenomena in Norway

The history of refugees in Norway dated back to the 1950s when people came from Hungary seeking protection but immigration and refugee settlement have only become a significant policy area for Norway in the 70s. It is not until the late 1960s that Norway started to have net migration. Prior to the Oil Crisis in 1973, most immigrants in Norway came for work, and there were near to no refugees (Pettersen and Østby 2013). Since then, there have been waves of refugee settlement following significant world events that force people to seek asylum in Europe and the Nordic region from war and prosecution.

Each wave brought a surge of refugees and immigrants from a certain country or region, ranging from Chile, and Vietnam in the 70s to Iran, former Yugoslavia and Sri Lanka in the 80s. (Wong 2020). Prior to the recent wave of refugees from Syria in 2015 and 2016, the last large wave of asylum seekers was between 2006 and 2012 from Somalia, Eritrea, Iraq and Afghanistan (Valenta 2014). According to Statistics Norway, as of July 2022, a total of 244,660 persons living in Norway with refugee backgrounds represent 4.5% of the population. Out of this figure, 45,063 are resettlement refugees 114,825 are asylum seekers 177,346 are principal applicants and among other categories from Western Europe, Central Europe, Africa, Asia including Turkey, North America and Oceania and South and Central America (SSB 2022).

According to Statistics Norway, there were 244, 660 refugees and family reunifications living in Norway as of 2021. Of these, 18,700 family members who had been reunited with the

refugees (43,700 of them had received a residency visa) made up the remaining 43,700. Syria, Afghanistan, and Eritrea are the three countries with the greatest refugee populations in Norway, followed by Somalia and Iran. Age-wise, 29% of refugees are between the ages of 25 and 29, making them the group with the youngest average age (Statistics Norway, 2021). Among these, Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Somalia, and Iran have the greatest refugee populations in Norway. A total of 17, 700 Syrian refugees and members of their families were residing in Norway as of 2021, while 9,500 Afghan refugees and family reunification residing in Norway (Statistics Norway, 2021).

Also, as of 2021, there were 6,200 Eritreans, 4,900 Somalian, 4,100 Iranian refugees, and family reunions, respectively living in Norway (Statistics Norway, 2021).

Table 2: Statistics of refugees to Norway as of January, 2023.

| Persons with a refugee background, as of 1 January | | | | |
|--|----------------|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| | 2022 | Change in percentage 2021 - 2022 | 2022 | |
| | | | Proportion of people with a refugee background out of all immigrants. Percentage | Share of people with a refugee background in the total population. Percentage |
| Total | 244,660 | 1.8 | 29.9 | 4.5 |
| Protagonist refugee | 177,346 | 1.6 | 21.6 | 3.3 |
| Asylum case | 114,825 | -0.2 | 14.0 | 2.1 |
| Transfer refugee | 45,063 | 7.8 | 5.5 | 0.8 |
| Another refugee | 9,444 | -0.8 | 1.2 | 0.2 |
| Flight unspecified | 8,014 | -0.9 | 1.0 | 0.1 |
| Family related to refugee | 67,314 | 2.4 | 8.2 | 1.2 |
| Family expansion | 18,390 | 2.5 | 2.2 | 0.3 |
| Family reunion | 48,877 | 2.4 | 6.0 | 0.9 |
| Family unspecified | 47 | 2.2 | 0.0 | 0.0 |

Source (Statistics Norway, 2023 [Personer med flyktningbakgrunn \(ssb.no\)](https://ssb.no))

The Norwegian Government's Introduction Programme for Refugees and Asylum Seekers

The Introduction Programmes for refugees are important in helping them integrate into Norwegian society. These initiatives are created to offer the support and materials that refugees need to settle into their new surroundings, become self-sufficient, and take an active role in their communities. These programmes enable refugees to reconstruct their lives, contribute to their new communities, and become active and independent members of Norwegian society by offering orientation, language skills, education, employment support, and social and cultural integration.

The Norwegian Government's Introduction Programme for Refugees and asylum seekers

Many nations around the world, including Norway, are becoming increasingly concerned about the problem of refugee integration into the job market. The number of refugees entering Norway has dramatically increased in recent years as a result of the ongoing refugee crisis. The long-term economic and social integration of refugees, as well as the development and expansion of the nation's economy, depend on their successful integration into the labour market (OECD, 2018). There are many obstacles that make it difficult for refugees to enter the workforce, including language barriers, a lack of formal education, and discrimination (Fossati & Hagen, 2018). The Norwegian government has put in place a number of laws and measures to make it easier for refugees to integrate into the labour market, including offering language classes, vocational training, and financial help to firms that take on refugees (Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity, 2019). Yet, it is unclear how well these measures and regulations work to encourage refugee absorption into the labour market.

To address the phenomena, the government introduced the Norwegian Integration Act, which included the creation of the Introductory Program for New Immigrants in Norway. In order for refugees to become independent and integrate into Norwegian society, the program was created to give them the knowledge and skills they need. A program supported by the government with the goal of assisting refugees in assimilating into Norwegian society is the Introductory Program for New Immigrants in Norway. As well as assistance with housing, work, and education search, the program offers language and vocational training.

The Norwegian Introduction Programme (NIP) was introduced in 2003. It consists mainly of language and on-the-job training similar to that provided through traditional Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMPs). The program is the most important public measure for newly arrived refugees in Norway. Under the Introduction Act, all refugees and their reunited family members between 18 and 55 years of age are entitled and obliged to participate in the IP within

two years of obtaining their residency. This applies from September 1, 2004, for anyone who became a resident as of September 1, 2003, or later (Hardoy, I., & Zhang, T. (2019, (introduksjonsloven fra 2003, a new law from 2020 January. The law exempts those who "do not need basic qualifications", such as people who go straight into paid work or ordinary education, or people who for medical or social reasons are unable to take advantage of the program. In addition, one can take paid leave from IP in case of illness or birth. About 65 to 70 per cent of refugees and their reunited family members participate in IP (Joyce, 2017).

In the Scandinavian countries such as Denmark, Norway and Sweden in recent decades, the number of migrants and the percentage of the population born outside the European Union (EU) and the European Economic Area (EEA) have increased substantially (Djuve & Grødem, 2014). Refugees have struggled to find a foothold in local labour markets despite full legal access to the labour market and significant integration efforts. Participation rates increase with the duration of residence but in most refugee groups they remain significantly lower than among natives (Djuve & Grødem, 2014). Are activation measures intended mainly to curb rights or to increase employability through social investment (Larsen, 2005)?

Djuve (2011) argues that this fairly sharp deviation from previous integration policy can be explained by a combination of critical juncture and path-dependency theory (Pierson, 2000), alongside theories of policy learning and the importance of ideas. However, Calmfors (1994) argues that the objective of labour market measures is to qualify and/or provide work training to enhance their employability or to start an education and reduce the likelihood of having to depend on the social security system (Calmfors, 1994).

Per the scholar's arguments, for minorities including refugees to fully integrate into society, it is crucial to create employment opportunities, ensure their access to employment, and uphold equitable employment standards. It means that minorities who are included in the labour force are more likely to feel included in society, to feel accepted, and to be able to contribute to the economy.

It then becomes obvious why immigration and integration debates overwhelmingly focus on the employment/unemployment of refugees. Despite all the attention being paid to how important labour integration is, Norwegians feel that the state of integration is far from satisfactory and blame the immigrants and refugees for the problem (IMDi 2011, cited in Swe, 2013, p. 230).

Research, however, indicates that having a formal education, in particular when the degree is obtained in the Norwegian language substantially increases refugees' chances of getting employed (Godøy, 2017). According to the Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social

Affairs Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Committee of OECD 2009 report on social, employment and migration working papers (No94) jobs for immigrants: labour market integration in Norway... [...] the scope and size of mentoring programs and other networking-related initiatives have so far been quite constrained in Norway. Several local projects have been made, but they are typically relatively small-scale and involve fewer than twenty people. This complicates evaluations and raises concerns about effectiveness because these programs also have some overhead expenses (Liebig, T. 2009). According to Godøy (2017), putting scale efficacy concerns aside, some projects nonetheless have admirable qualities that seem to deserve an extension. A 2017 study conducted by Godøy reveals that the Kompass program had a favourable impact on the employment paths of migrants in Norway. According to the study, refugees who took part in the program had a higher chance of finding work and the program improved their long-term employment chances Gody (2017). For instance, the Regional Federation of the Norwegian Business for the Agder Area in Southern Norway developed a mentoring program for highly educated immigrants in collaboration with the nearby business school. Native students can get credits for their university in the area of management development skills by serving as mentors on the project (see OECD 2009).

So, what steps can duty-bearers and policy markers take to address the difficulties that refugees have when they attempt to enter the labour market after finishing a thorough two-year orientation program? However, it remains unclear whether these activities and regulations are effective in facilitating the integration of refugees into the labour market in Norway. Therefore, this thesis aims to examine and understand the labour market inclusion process among skilled refugees in Norway, as well as pinpoint the main obstacles and difficulties that refugees have when trying to enter and participate in the labour market. To provide a thorough understanding of the problem, this study will draw from the body of available literature on the integration of refugees into the labour market, including studies carried out in Norway and other nations. By doing so, this study will help to improve understanding of the elements that aid or obstruct refugee integration into the labour market and help to guide future policy development in this area.

Research question and sub-questions

The overarching research question in this thesis is the following:

-How can we understand the integration process of highly-skilled refugees who have obtained paid jobs in the Norwegian labour market?

The sub-questions that I will explore are the following themes:

- Labour market aspirations of refugees upon arrival in Norway
- How refugees obtain their first paid job
- Current work-life situation and experiences

Refugees' knowledge of the English language and its impact on getting a paid job as well as the influence of their families, friends relations and social networks on their job-seeking processes will be explored. The research will draw on concepts from migration studies and labour market integration, such as the role of social networks, cultural capital and institutional barriers, to inform the analysis of the data. The methodological steps for the research will involve conducting semi-structured interviews with highly-skilled refugees in Norway, with a focus on exploring their experiences of job search and employment. The data will be analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, which involves identifying patterns and themes within the data. The research will also adhere to ethical guidelines, including obtaining informed consent from participants and ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of their data.

In particular, I will focus on refugees who have vocational training (fagbrev) or an academic degree (bachelor's degree or more) from either Norway or their country of origin.

Aim of the study

The study aims to address the following issues at hand:

- To explore highly-skilled refugees' experiences in obtaining paid employment in the labour market in Norway.
- To deepen our understanding of what influences the labour market integration in Norway among this particular group of people.

My objective is to examine how highly-skilled refugees integrate into the labour market in Norway. I chose to concentrate on refugee participants who are proficient in English and located in a Scandinavian country such as Norway, given my background originating from an English-speaking country, Ghana. According to some pieces of literature and scholars, selecting interviewees who are fluent in the same language as the interviewer might have several advantages. Liu and Schallert (2014), argue that communication during the interview may be more effective if the interviewer and participant are of the same language. The authors emphasised that this may lead to a greater comprehension of the participant's opinions and experiences (Liu & Schallert, 2014). Fook et al. (2006), argue when the interviewee and interviewer speak the same language, rapport is improved, cultural sensitivity is increased, it's easier to understand the nuances of the participant's experiences and prevents

misunderstandings or misinterpretations, and the data quality is also improved (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). I want to explore the processes and their understanding of integration into the Norwegian labour market. I also want to explore if they go through some form of challenges and find out how their social networks played a role in their integration processes.

Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into six chapters. Chapter One introduced and set the background of the study. It deals with the labour market inclusion process among highly-skilled refugees in Norway and outlines the key research issues, justification and study objectives. This chapter will also present the background information for the study and historical information about refugees in Norway.

Chapter two provides a review of studies conducted on the integration of refugees into the labour market. The chapter begins by introducing the theoretical frameworks that serve as the foundation for this thesis: structuration theory, social capital theory, integration theory, and human capital theory. These frameworks will be used to analyse the results of the research presented in this thesis.

Chapter three presents the methodological decisions made and the steps taken to examine my research questions. As a result, the philosophical underpinning, and study design including information on participants, recruitment, data gathering (individual interviews), and procedures for the data analysis are covered in this chapter.

Chapter four presents the analysis of the data collected from the study, including themes, patterns, and other important findings related to the research question. It covers an in-depth analysis of the interview data collected from the highly skilled refugees, including their experiences and challenges in finding employment, their perceptions of the Norwegian labour market and their strategies for navigating the job search process. The chapter also presents themes or patterns that emerged from the analysis of the data and discusses how these findings contribute to the research question and the relevant literature

Chapter Five presents analyses of the study's findings, their implications for theory and practice, the limitations of the thesis, and potential areas for future research on the integration of refugees. It also provides suggestions on how to address the key findings of the research paper to make refugees' access to the labour market easier. In chapter six, I end the thesis with some concluding remarks.

CHAPTER TWO:

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Introduction

In this chapter, I will place my work within a scholarly context, and in so doing, present the theoretical framework that has guided me when analyzing and making sense of my data. In particular, the chapter aims to discuss other studies on refugees' integration into labour and then evaluate such studies in relation to the current study. Also, to situate this study in established ideas, this chapter examines relevant theories on refugees' integration into the labour market. More specifically, in this chapter, I will present and discuss the relevant theories that will be used in analyzing and contextualizing the study data. These theories include the Structuration Theory, Human Capital Theory, Social Capital Theory and Integration Theory.

A theoretical framework is a foundational structure comprising concepts, assumptions and expectations used to guide research or analysis (Creswell, 2014). It helps researchers understand, interpret, and explain phenomena by establishing logical connections between the research problem, questions, and design. It acts as a conceptual map, aiding in identifying relevant variables and relationships, as well as selecting appropriate research methods and data analysis techniques (Babie, 2016).

Structuration Theory

Structuration theory is a social theory developed by sociologist, Anthony Giddens. According to the theory, social structures are generated and reproduced via the interactions and activities of individuals rather than acting as external forces that impose restrictions on people (Giddens 1976). In a book titled "An Overview of the structuration theory relating to the structure of society. Political Press", (Giddens 1984) Giddens contends that social institutions serve as both a vehicle and a product for human action.

Margaret Archer, a sociologist who uses Giddens' structuration theory in the study of social change, argues that social structures are formed and reproduced by human interaction and are not immutable objects (Archer 1995) whiles (Orlikowski 1992) makes the case that the theory can aid researchers in comprehending how structure and agency interact in social work practice. Wanda Orlikowski, an organizational theorist, contends that technology both

influences and changes social structures by using Giddens' structuration theory to investigate technology in companies (Orlikowski 1992).

In other words, the framework offered by structural theory helps people to comprehend how people's behaviours and interactions result in and replicate social structures. This theory can aid us in comprehending how social structures like discrimination and access to education and training are created and perpetuated through the activities of individuals, institutions, and organizations in the context of refugees' integration into the Norwegian labour market.

According to (Borch & Kure 2019) who carried out research on “Employment integration of refugees in Norway: The role of employers. *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies*, 9(1), 107-125” applying the structuration theory to the investigation of employers' contributions to the integration of refugees into the workforce in Norway. The authors argue that businesses' behaviours and interactions with refugees have an impact on the social structures that determine how readily available jobs are for migrants.

Social networks and connections can both support and undermine the social institutions that have an impact on how well refugees are integrated into the labour market (Rye & Solheim 2019), but (Bakken & Dale-Olsen 2018), on the other hand, who applies structuration theory to the research of refugee education and training programs in Norway, arguing that these programs can aid refugees in obtaining the skills and credentials necessary to succeed in the labour market and that the actions of people, organizations, and institutions have an impact on their success.

(Frattini & Meschi 2019) who recently did a study about the labour market integration of refugees in Norway: A dynamic approach. *International Migration*, 57(3), 199-214, the authors argue that interactions between employers, governmental agencies, and the host community influence how well refugees integrate into the labour market and that these interactions are continuously reshaping the social structures that determine the opportunities and limitations that refugees face in the labour market.

The sociologist Anthony Giddens' structurization theory has been used in a variety of ways to examine social phenomena in Norway.

According to (Borch & Kure 2019). *Employment integration of refugees in Norway: The role of employers. Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies*, 9(1), 107-125, the authors contend that businesses' behaviours and interactions with refugees have an impact on the social structures that determine how readily available jobs are for migrants.

(Solheim & Rye 2018) in their opinion said in order to address social structures like prejudice and access to education and training, one must concentrate on altering institutional practices as

well as individual conduct. Social structures like these are formed and reproduced by the activities of people, institutions, and organizations (Solheim & Rye 2018).

Social Capital Theory

Sociologist James Coleman is typically credited with developing social capital theory. Coleman defined social capital as "resources entrenched in social connections and social institutions, which can be mobilized when an actor wants to derive advantages from resources that others have in their possession" in his landmark work "Foundations of Social Theory" (1990). (p. 302).

Social theorists like Pierre Bourdieu and Robert Putnam, who also wrote on the significance of social networks and ties in social and economic life, laid the groundwork for Coleman's views in earlier works. Coleman's unique understanding of social capital and its function in promoting both individual and group behaviour, however, has had a big impact on subsequent study in sociology, economics, political science, and other disciplines (Coleman1990).

There are several works of literature highlighting the importance of social capital in facilitating the labour market integration of refugees in Norway. Social networks, trust, and access to information and resources all play critical roles in helping refugees navigate the job search process and succeed in finding employment.

A study by authors Steen & Vike (2020) titled "From Refugee to Employee: How social networks and information channels facilitate labour market integration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 46(14), 3004-3020, highlights the importance of social networks and information channels in helping refugees integrate into the Norwegian labour market is examined. It is discovered that refugees who have more robust social networks and access to information find jobs more readily.

Fossland & Myhre (2017) focuses on the importance of the value of social networks, knowledge, and trust, this paper proposes a conceptual framework for comprehending the function of social capital in assisting the integration of refugees into the Norwegian labour market. Rye & Kavli's (2019) study on "Refugees' social capital and assimilation into the Norwegian labour market. 45(5), 798-815; *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*" explores the connection between social capital and the integration of refugees into the Norwegian labour market, making the case that social networks and trust are crucial for enabling employment opportunities and information access.

These literary references emphasize the value of social capital in aiding refugees' absorption into the Norwegian job market. Access to knowledge and resources, social networks, and trust

all play crucial roles in assisting refugees in navigating the job search process and securing employment.

Integration Theory

Integration theory in the context of refugee migration is a subject of research that is relatively new, with roots that may be found in the 20th century. After the rise in the number of refugees worldwide and the realization that supporting their assimilation into host societies was necessary, the study of refugee integration acquired importance in the 1980s... [...] In 1981, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) released one of the early publications on refugee integration. In the report, "Refugees in an Urban Environment: Issues of Adaptation," the difficulties that refugees have adjusting to urban life were noted, and integration support measures were suggested (UNHCR, 1981). Since then, a large number of academics and organizations have helped to advance integration theory in relation to refugee migration. To comprehend the integration process of refugees, various theoretical frameworks within integration theory have been established, such as:

- The Cultural Integration Model (CIM): According to John W. Berry and his colleagues (CIM), acculturation and integration involve both the person and the cultural setting in which they reside. This framework highlights the significance of adaptation tactics that encourage both cultural preservation and integration into the host society (Berry, 1997).
- The Social Integration Model (SIM): The (SIM) by Irene Bloemraad emphasizes the value of social networks and refugee participation in neighbourhood groups and activities for successful integration (Bloemraad, 2006).
- The Ecological Model of Refugee Integration: According to Catherine Harris and colleagues (EMRI), which emphasizes the significance of social support, resources, and services, the host community plays a significant role in influencing how refugees integrate (Harris et al., 2011).

In the area of refugee integration, these theoretical frameworks have been utilized to direct research and policy development. For instance, they have been utilized to develop interventions and programs that promote refugees' access to social networks, education, employment, and housing opportunities.

Human Capital Theory

According to the human capital theory, a person's degree of education, skills, and experience have a significant role in determining how well-integrated they will be into the labour market

and society at large [...] in Norway, where education and training are frequently crucial elements in successful integration, this notion can be used to the integration of refugees (Weiss, Klein, & Grauenhorst 2014). In order to help refugees, acquire the needed skills they need to be successful in the Norwegian labour market, Norway offers them language classes and educational options. According to the human capital theory, these programs can be very helpful in assisting refugees in assimilating into society since they give them the opportunity to acquire the skills and information necessary for them to obtain jobs and make a positive contribution to Norwegian society.

A further claim made by the human capital theory is that societal and individual long-term gains can result from expenditures in education and training. According to (Faggian, Modrego, and McCann 2019) the benefits of a more competent and diversified workforce as well as a more inclusive and cohesive society may be realized by Norway if it invests in the education and skill-building of refugees (Faggian, Modrego & McCann 2019 p 149-171).

Human capital theory, however, does not take into account the many additional elements that may have an impact on refugees' integration, including prejudice, linguistic challenges, and cultural disparities. To guarantee that refugees are fully assimilated into Norwegian society, efforts to address these other issues must be made in addition to education and skill development, which are crucial elements of effective integration.

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The integration of refugees into host societies, such as in Norway, has frequently been studied using the human capital hypothesis. Among the most important works on this subject are: Anne Britt Djuve & Line Eldring and Andrea Sørvoll.

In a study (Djuve & Grødem 2014) on “Education and employment of refugees in Norway”, in this study, the labour market results of refugees in Norway are examined, and it is discovered that education is a significant factor in determining both employment and income. The authors contend that bettering the integration outcomes of refugees in Norway requires investments in language and educational programs.

Also, another study by Sandlie & Sørvoll “Refugee education in Norway: A qualitative study of pathways to integration”, this study examines the experiences of refugee students in Norway's educational system and discovers that for refugees, education can be a crucial step

toward integration. According to the author, educational initiatives should be focused on meeting the requirements of refugee students, and initiatives should be taken to give them opportunities to advance their abilities and learn a new language (Sandlie & Sørvoll 2017).

Apart from the Norway context, another study by a sociologist (Asad Asad 2015) on refugees' integration, the study investigates the effects of human capital elements on the labour market outcomes of refugees in the United States, including education and language proficiency. The author concludes that expenditures in education and language programs can help to enhance the outcomes of refugees' integration and that education and language proficiency are significant predictors of employment and earnings for refugees (Asad 2015).

Overall, this study emphasizes the value of facilitating refugees' enrollment in educational and language programs in order to help them thrive in their new environment.

According to the Human Capital Theory, putting money into refugees' education and skill-building can make it easier for them to integrate into the host society. According to this hypothesis, education and training can help refugees build their human capital, which can improve their economic and social outcomes. In order to make it easier for refugees to integrate into Norwegian society, a number of projects have been implemented in Norway to improve their human capital. The Skills and Education Initiative of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), which seeks to give refugees access to educational and vocational training programs, is one such. The project aims to increase the employability of refugees, foster their integration into Norwegian society, and develop their human capital (NRC, 2021). The Norwegian government launched the Integration and Inclusion Fund in 2017. It is another project. The fund contributes money to initiatives intended to improve immigrants' and refugees' integration into Norwegian society. The fund focuses on providing funding for activities that support initiatives that encourage language learning, education, and skill development among refugees and immigrants (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2017).

According to research, fostering the human capital of migrants can have a positive impact on the economy and society. In a 2011 study by Bratsberg and Raaum, for instance, it was discovered that refugees who had access to education and training programs in Norway had greater employment rates and incomes than those who did not. In a similar vein, Raaum and Zimmermann's (2018) research discovered that refugees who participated in language and vocational training programs in Norway had better employment rates and were more likely to work in skilled occupations.

In conclusion, the Human Capital Theory offers a framework for comprehending the significance of education and skill development in assisting refugee integration into Norwegian

society. The Norwegian government's dedication to fostering the human capital of refugees is evidenced by programs like the Integration and Inclusion Fund and the Skills and Education Initiative. These activities may result in better economic and social outcomes for refugees in Norway, as suggested by the successful outcomes found in research by Bratsberg and Raaum (2011) and Raaum and Zimmermann (2018). By combining these perspectives, we can gain a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by refugees in achieving successful integration and the factors that contribute to their economic and social outcomes. Integration theory helps us recognize the importance of fostering social cohesion, promoting cultural exchange, and ensuring equal access to opportunities for refugees. The human capital theory emphasizes the significance of education and skills training in enhancing refugees' human capital, which in turn increases their employability and economic self-sufficiency.

Structuration theory complements these perspectives by emphasizing the role of social structures and institutions in shaping the opportunities available to refugees. It recognizes that societal norms, policies, and practices can either enable or hinder refugees' integration and economic participation. By understanding the interplay between individual agencies and social structures, we can identify and address barriers that impede refugees' progress and leverage existing structures to support their integration efforts.

Combining these theoretical perspectives has been helpful in several ways. Firstly, it provides a holistic approach that considers the multifaceted nature of refugee integration, acknowledging the interconnections between economic, social, and cultural dimensions (Bratsberg and Raaum, 2011). This allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing refugees' outcomes and enables the development of targeted interventions that address multiple aspects of integration simultaneously. Secondly, it helps policymakers and practitioners recognize the importance of long-term investments in refugees' human capital development. By providing access to education, language training, vocational programs and job placement support, refugees can acquire the skills and qualifications necessary to succeed in the labour market. This approach aligns with human capital theory, which highlights the value of investing in individuals' abilities and knowledge as a pathway to economic success. Lastly, the incorporation of structuration theory emphasizes the need to address systemic barriers and inequalities that refugees may face. By examining the influence of social structures, policies, and institutions, we can identify and challenge discriminatory practices, promote inclusive policies, and advocate for changes in societal norms that hinder refugees' integration. This perspective encourages a critical examination of the existing structures and

power dynamics, leading to more informed and transformative approaches to refugee integration.

Integrating theories of integration, human capital, and structuration provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and promoting better economic and social outcomes for refugees in Norway. This approach recognizes the complexity of integration processes, emphasizes the importance of human capital development, and sheds light on the role of social structures in shaping refugees' opportunities. By combining these perspectives, policymakers and practitioners can design interventions and policies that facilitate successful integration and enhance the overall well-being of refugees in Norway.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the methodological concepts and procedures used in the conception, execution, and conclusion of this master's thesis research project is given in this chapter. It highlights the many methodological approaches used in this study to answer the research question “How can we understand the integration process of highly-skilled refugees who have obtained a well-paid job in the Norwegian labour market”?

Philosophical Foundation

Methodology in research is defined as a theory and analysis of how research should proceed (Harding, 1987, p. 2), an analysis of the assumptions, principles, and procedures in a particular approach to inquiry (Schwandt, 2001, p. 161), or the study—the description, the explanation, and the justification - of methods, and not the methods themselves (Kaplan, 1964, p. 18). In other words, the methodology justifies the methods of a research project. Methods are "techniques for gathering evidence (Harding, 1987, p. 2) or "procedures, tools and techniques" of research (Schwandt, 2001, p. 158).

The scientific revolution of the 17th century, which emphasized empirical observation and experimentation, is largely responsible for the development of current research techniques (Kuhn, 2012). The contemporary scientific method, which included systematic observation, experimentation, and hypothesis testing, was created by the philosopher and scientist Francis Bacon, in the 17th century (Bacon, 1620). The development of various research methodologies, such as quantitative research, which emphasizes the use of numerical data and statistical analysis, and qualitative research, which concentrates on the interpretation of subjective experiences and behaviours, was influenced by this approach to knowledge acquisition (Creswell, 2014). A variety of methodologies, including mixed-methods research, action research, and participatory research, among others, have been part of research techniques over time. These many methodologies give researchers a variety of tools and techniques to gather and analyze data in an organized and thorough manner (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Planning/Research Design

The research design consists of the fundamental framework for a study to answer the research questions (Cohen et al., 2017). Also, the design aids the researcher in deciding how to handle difficulties like how to gather data, how to sample, how much money is needed, how long the study will take, and how to analyze data (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Punch, 2013, p. 114). Bias is typically reduced by good research designs. It ensures coherence and fit with study objectives, conceptual framework, and theoretical framework while maximizing the trustworthiness of the data gathered and processed (Punch, 2013, p. 114).

The design used in this thesis is in-depth interviews and drawing on secondary data from existing pieces of literature on refugees' integration into the labour market in Norway. Where I did one-on-one interviews or conversations with participants, in a semi-structured format in which I seeks to elicit detailed information about the participant's experiences, and beliefs about the labour market integration by refugees.

Qualitative Research Method

To answer my research question, a qualitative research approach was regarded as the most suitable. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003), the qualitative method of research is defined as “a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations; including field notes interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self...[Q] Qualitative research also involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them” (Denzin and Lincoln 2003: 4-6). In this project, I used the qualitative method to collect data to answer the research question, I used it because this type of method provides descriptive data and analysis to enhance my research topic which focuses on refugees' integration into the Norwegian labour market. In particular, I did qualitative interviews with x participants. Qualitative interviews are critical to research because they provide a thorough grasp of participants' viewpoints, make it possible to gain context-specific insights, and help develop theories. They offer a singular chance to capture the depth and diversity of human experiences, ensuring that research findings are thorough, significant, and applicable. In the following, I will describe the recruitment process, present the background of my participants, and describe how the interviews were conducted as well as what kind of data I obtained through my interviews.

Interviews

In-depth and detailed information can be obtained from participants during interviews, enabling researchers to examine their perspectives, experiences, and opinions. Because interviews are a priceless chance to explore the viewpoints and experiences of participants, fostering a deeper comprehension of the research topic. Researchers can collect rich and valuable data to support their study goals by adhering to these standards and conducting interviews with care and attention to ethical considerations. I conducted it through semi-structured interviews in one-on-one conversations with the participants to get first-hand information on processes leading to obtaining paid employment in the Norwegian labour market.

This method was an avenue for participants to express their views by providing answers to the research questions I designed. The interview was more relaxed and flexible because I could ask follow-up questions apart from the written questions I prepared for the research. The interviews I had with the participants lasted between 50-60 minutes per person and enough data was gathered for the study. In this study, eight (8) participants were interviewed through the semi-structured process for data gathering.

I asked the participants the same questions relating to the study systematically, while I asked others subtopics and questions that I deduce from other participant's interviews and got relevant data to answer my research question while on the field.

Face-to-face interviews, according to Creswell (2014), are especially helpful in gathering rich and thorough information about individual experiences, attitudes, and beliefs. The majority of the participants come from Africa where I was born. As an African student, I can relate to the perspectives and experiences shared by the majority of the participants.

The shared experiences between myself and the participants fostered empathy and allowed me to pose perceptive queries that relate to the participants' experiences. It also helped me during the interview to comprehend and analyze the responses more accurately.

The "African connection" between the participants and myself created rapport and trust that enabled me to get adequate information. A more relaxed and open atmosphere for conversation during the interview resulted from this common context. While having a common continental background with the participants helped me to appreciate and understand the issues, I maintained standards of ethical consideration without biases and misconceptions. It was crucial for me to maintain an open mind and to actively listen to avoid ignoring various viewpoints within the framework of the continent.

My experience with meeting the participants face-to-face is that it was relaxed. I could feel the ambience around me and laugh with the participants in a friendly manner. Unlike the online interview where the participant was busy at work when I called for the interview so it was done in a rush manner without delays or creating the needed environment for “jokes and laughter”. Looking at the study and the information required, I met each participant for a single interview session after building the needed rapport. During each interview, I took field notes as the interview progresses because such information is crucial for research interviews as it offers thorough documentation and context information, assists reflexivity, and memory aid, serves as a foundation for analysis, contributes to transparency, makes verification easier, and handle ethical issues. The field notes served as a memory aid as they helped me to record instant impressions and asked follow-up questions throughout or right away following the interview. The field notes assisted me during the analysis part of this study.

According to Jowett & Peel (2014), it is crucial to make sure that the participant is at ease with the technology being utilized and has access to the right tools and a dependable internet connection to solve these restrictions. Also, by using secure platforms and safeguarding participant data, researchers should take precautions to maintain privacy and confidentiality (Jowett & Peel, 2014). This conforms with ethical standards to protect the identities and data collected from participants.

The semi-structured interviews were designed to align with the research questions. This involved creating interview guides for each sample group and ensuring that the interviews stayed focused on the main objective of the study. The focus of the questions was condensed to only a few to try and address the research issue and achieve the study's goal, thus why I narrowed it to highly-skilled refugees. Although the interviews were semi-structured, research participants were free to express themselves and tell their tales whichever they felt best suited the interview questions and the overall goal of the study. It was crucial to ensure that the inductive method of data collection and analysis would not be impacted by the interview questions that were inferred from the research questions and the literature.

Individual qualitative interviews were conducted utilizing a semi-structured interview style that served as the primary mode of data collection for this project (see chapter three, the method of data collection). The participants of the study consist of eight (8) refugees (six females and two males). A combination of coding and theme analysis was used to examine all 8 interviews, which were done, recorded, and written down in English (see Methods and Data Analysis in Chapter Three). The results are presented fully anonymously without the use of any names or pseudonyms that could be used to identify any of the individuals—not out of carelessness, but

rather because NSD regulations forbade me from using assumed names or reusing the same individuals throughout the data.

The study's conclusions or findings shed light on the geographic, structural, and personal obstacles that refugees in Norway face when trying to integrate into the workforce. The processes and challenges connected to refugees' attempts to get paid jobs within the labour market are among the hurdles to refugees accessing employment that were discovered and characterized by analytical coding and thematic analysis (Clarke et al., 2015). To make the results of this study simple to follow and contextually understandable, they are given within several theoretical and conceptual themes and subthemes that emerged from the data. A breakdown of the sub-themes that emerged from the data is as follows:

- Labour market aspirations upon arrival in Norway
- Obtaining the first paid job
- Use of network via the introduction programme
- Use of network through family relations
- Use of personal network
- Use of close friends/associates
- Networking through volunteering
- Current work-life situation and experiences (what is the significance of having their current job?)
- Having a paid job - does that equate to being integrated into Norwegian society?
- Does refugees' knowledge of the English language increase their chances of getting paid employment or expanding their network?

Recruitment

A critical stage in qualitative research is recruiting informants, which entails locating and choosing people who have the necessary information, experience, or skill concerning the study issue (Morrow, 2005).

For this study, I used snowballing sampling to recruit my participants or informants. Snowball sampling is selecting a starting group of informants with the necessary expertise or experience, and then asking them to suggest additional potential informants who can help with the study. This technique helps locate individuals who are a part of a certain social network or group or difficult-to-reach populations (Creswell, 2014).

Despite its limitation, networking characteristics and flexibility, snowball sampling has become a popular means of recruiting research participants when seeking access to hard-to-reach populations (Parker et al., 2019).

Before reaching out to the participants for the interviews, my supervisor introduced one potential participant to me who was already my Facebook friend but I didn't know she had a refugee background. She agreed to be interviewed and later connected me to the majority of the other participants. In this way, she became a key person or a gate opener who assisted me to get more participants for this study. She was amazing and very helpful simply because she took it upon herself to call someone on the phone, and sent messages on Facebook Messenger and SMS to reach out to potential participants with refugee backgrounds. It was very difficult in identifying the participants as international student without a social network to reach out for assistance. Contact with the first participant was established in June 2022, and after building rapport through Facebook messenger chats, SMS and phone calls, the interview with her was done in August. After the interview, she referred to me a total of fifteen (15) contacts. However, after contacting all of them, some were not eager to participate while others also did not respond to the invitation nor replied to my email and messages. Eventually, however, the initial participant, in this thesis I call her by the pseudonym Aziza, helped to identify seven other participants, which together totalled the eight participants who were successfully interviewed for this study. I was also in contact with other persons in other cities in Norway who tried to help me to get in touch with potential participants, but this did not result in additional participants after all. I used a digital recorder for a face-to-face interview with seven (7) participants and I did one interview via virtually or Zoom [online].

Data Gathering

In gathering data for this study, I conducted interviews with three participants at different locations. One interview took place at the Public Library, another at NLA University's campus in Sandviken, Bergen, and the remaining two interviews were conducted at a café there were some differences with regards to the location I met each participant. The interviews in the office space were more formal because of the environment, while the café interviews were different due to the ambience and the environment. Before meeting the participants in-person for the interview, I sent copies of the interview guide with the questionnaire to participants to prepare themselves for the interview.

Upon arriving at their respective desired locations for the interviews, I introduced myself to them and thanked them for their time to be part of the interview. We exchanged pleasantries

and talked about their day-to-day activities, family life here in Norway, and the welfare of family members back home from their respective countries of origin I also shared information about myself, when I arrived here and student life in Norway at large. Before proceeding to the interview, I handed over copies of the questions on “A4 sheets” to them for their perusal and consent to be part of this study per ethical standards. After taking them through the interview guide and the approval I received from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD), I asked them for permission to record the interviews on a digital recorder for transcribing purposes and the quality of the data I am collecting as well. I also informed them that the recording will be deleted after the project per “(NESH 2016:5) and (Research Ethics Act 2017 [2006] Personal Data Act§19, 20, 23 and 24.2018, The Norwegian Constitution, Intellectual Property Act, Laws and regulations such as the Public Administration Act, 1967)”. When they felt at home and comfortable around me, then I began the interviews. Immediately they agreed with all the modalities of the interview to be recorded or our conversations to be on the record, I switched on the recorder to commence recording the conversation. During the interviews, I had my notebook with a pen on me to take notes of salient points of each interview I conducted. I recorded the time, day or date and venue for each interview I did for this study. Immediately after each interview, I wrote summaries afterwards to myself as a guide for my data analysis and my supervisor’s consideration and input. It also helps me to identify keywords that summarize each interview i.e., integration, employment, language, challenges and amongst others. To preserve, and maintain ethical standards and for purposes of documentation, data organization, analysis, data reduction, validation, and reporting, writing the summaries of each interview with the research participants was crucial. The summaries helped me to efficiently manage and get some overview of the data, and glean insightful knowledge.

As mentioned above, I met the participants in the environment of their choice. Oftentimes we shared a coffee or tea and some pastries. The provided environment for conducting a face-to-face interview is critical for both physical and online interviews (Kazmer & Xie, 2008, p. 264). The environment I conducted the interviews i.e., the café, public library, and offices was conducive for our conversation especially the ambience at the café, where I could see different kinds of people walking in and out whiles the interviews progresses was a good feeling for me. After all the modalities has been agreed upon by me [Master student] and the participant, I began to ask questions about the following...

- Your background, and how was it for you to settle in Norway as a refugee?
- Efforts made to enter the Norwegian labour market;
- Experiences of unemployment (for how long, what did it make you feel)? and

- Experiences with obtaining the first paid job until the job you hold today, e.g., steps taken, barriers you overcame, and how your different jobs made you feel?

To get rich answers, I made sure to ask follow-up questions such as Can you elaborate? Can you explain further? or can you provide an example?

Presentation of the Participants

In the following, I will give an overview of the eight participants that agreed to take part in this study. The majority of the participants came from Africa, and the rest from the Middle East. Among the 8 participants, three of them arrived in Norway as teenagers, Chéckina was the youngest amongst came at the age of 16 years the rest, both Aziza and Zebunissa were 18 and 19 years of age respectively.

At the time of the interview, Ibrahim was the youngest (32 years) while Mao Zedong (48 years) in 2022. Of all the participants I spoke with, 6 were female and 2 were male.

The participants who settled in Norway as teenagers were of course without higher education at the time of arrival, while the rest had some level of higher education in their country of origin before they arrived in Norway.

To make it easier for the reader to get an overview of them, I will start by presenting them in the following table:

Table 3: Profile overview of the participants as at August 2022

| Living Norway since | Pseudonym | Gender | Age | Childhood Aspirations | Current Employment Status | Level of Education | Job related to studies | Level of Norwegian |
|---------------------|-------------|--------|-----|--|------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| 1999 | Aarifa | F | 45 | Medical Doctor | Social Worker | Master's degree | Yes | Fluent |
| 2002 | Kinyarwanda | F | 43 | Journalist or Lawyer | Consultant at Social welfare | Master's | Yes | Fluent |
| 2003 | Zebunissa | F | 39 | Ophthalmologist | Laboratory Technician | Master's degree | Yes | Fluent |
| 2004 | Mao Zedong | M | 48 | Human rights activist or Secretary General of UN | Coordinator/Social Worker | Master's degree | No | Fluent |
| 2005 | Aziza | F | 35 | Journalist | Team Lead/CEO at an NGO | Master's degree | Yes | Fluent |
| 2006 | Chéckina | F | 35 | Army Officer | Social Commentator | Master's degree | Yes | Fluent |
| 2010 | Adebanke | F | 38 | Fashion designer | Social Worker | Master's Degree | Yes | Fluent |
| 2015 | Ibrahim | M | 32 | Dentistry or Surgeon | Journalist | Master's degree | Yes | Fair |

At the time of the interview, all eight participants had tertiary-level education in Norway. Three of them had a master's degree. Three of them were at the University level pursuing various courses at the time of the interview. Finally, two of the participants had completed their secondary education before arriving in Norway. However, they were unable to continue their tertiary education in their home countries due to the sudden conflicts and disturbances they experienced.

The participants had to flee from their countries of origin for a number of complicated and frequently linked reasons. A mixture of push and pull forces frequently influences the participant's decision to leave their country of origin and seek safety in Norway. Among the reasons the participants flee their home country are ethnic and intergroup conflict, humanitarian crises, war and conflict, and persecution. These varied humanitarian crises affected the participant's upbringing in their country of origin, these effects include disruption of education, social life, health and safety. Most of the participants came to Norway through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

resettlement arrangements, while the rest used other routes to seek protection to escape death threats.

Secondary Data

Secondary data refers to information that has already been gathered, documented, or published by other researchers, organizations, or sources (Bryman, 2016). Such data could be obtained through government publications, scholarly journals, books, reports, and Internet databases. Bryman (2016) asserts that secondary data can be utilized in research to supplement or complete primary data, which is gathered directly from participants. Secondary data can offer background knowledge, contextualize the research topic, and aid in determining the current level of knowledge in a certain field (Bryman, 2016).

In addition to the interviews, I conducted to gather data, additional data was retrieved from institutions such as Statistics Norway, the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI), and The Directorate of Integration and Diversity a Norwegian (IMDi). I also had information from online resources such as academic research, articles, journals, magazines, libraries, books, newspapers and internet search engines [Google Scholar] and others.

Research Challenges or Limitations

Finding additional potential participants posed a challenge because some of them were only fluent in their native languages and Norwegian, but did not have proficiency in English. Although English is a common language in Norway, linguistic limitations were a challenge for me to recruit some participants who only speak the native-Norwegian language. Others also declined over issues concerning confidentiality and data storage. The medium for the interview was conducted in English because of my background as an Anglophone native speaker. Also, some potential participants I communicated to partake in the research who were ready to be interviewed later declined to participate for unknown reasons.

Positionality: a few reflections on my position in this study

Positionality describes an individual's worldview and the position they adopt about a research task and its social and political context (Foote & Bartell 2011, Savin-Baden & Major, 2013 Rowe, 2014). It also "reflects the position that the researcher has chosen to adopt within a given research study" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013 p.71), (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013 p. 71) It influences both how research is conducted, its outcomes, and results (Rowe, 2014).

Writing about positionality is important, because the research procedure and data gathering and interpretation may be impacted by my own social identity, values, cultural beliefs and background. Many academics have emphasized the significance of taking positionality into account while conducting research on refugees. For instance, Moosavi (2019) talks about the moral and intellectual difficulties of conducting research with refugees, as well as the significance of the researcher's positionality (Moosavi, 2019). Similar to Strand and Ghorashi (2015), they discuss the difficulties they faced as outsiders in the refugee population when conducting research on refugees (Strand & Ghorashi 2015). The complexity of positionality and reflexivity in global research is discussed by Lie and Puwar (2015), who emphasize the significance of understanding the researcher's positionality and its possible influence on the research process (Lie & Puwar 2015).

In August 2021, I arrived in Bergen, Norway for my master's studies after completing a bachelor's degree in Communication Studies (Strategic Communication) in Accra-Ghana at the African University College of Communication (AUCC). This is my first study abroad as compared to that of my home country where I had education from the basic level to university level.

As a student, coming from an African where the majority of the participants originated from was very helpful and significant. The following are some ways that my positionality affected the relationships between myself and the participants who are mainly from Africa. Having a common African cultural background with other participants from the same continent helps me as a student to build relationships and a sense of familiarity. Our common cultural allusions, language, and experiences foster a relaxed atmosphere and encouraged the participants to freely discuss their opinions and experiences without any hesitations.

Also, my experience as an African student gave me a unique insider perspective and insights into the social, political, and cultural dynamics of the environment in which the participants are involved. You may be able to examine particular themes or issues that are significant to the community, ask pertinent and insightful questions, and analyze the data through a more rounded perspective with this insider knowledge.

In addition, having participants with comparable backgrounds help to foster a feeling of shared identity. Participants felt more comfortable and very open during the interview process since they believe in who I am and related to their situations and comprehend their difficulties. They were more at ease talking to men about their feelings, opinions, and experiences in Norway. My age and gender did not have any influence during the interview,

however, positionality as an African male student it was crucial for me to approach the research or interviews with reflexivity, openness, and sensitivity to diversity. Although having an African student status was beneficial, however, I was mindful to avoid any form of biases and presumptions during the data gathering processes. I maintained my neutrality in accordance with ethical standards. At the end of the day, being conscious of my positionality as an African student and using it in a responsible and ethical way helps to create more meaningful and culturally sensitive research connections with participants from comparable backgrounds.

In summary, this study's goal in highlighting the significance of recognising and considering my positionality as an international student researching refugees in Norway is to draw a close. In order to do ethical, considerate, and valuable research on refugees, I must be aware of and reflect on my positionality. By doing this, I was better at negotiating the difficulties it involved.

Ethical Considerations

Since the data I collected for this project came from a group of a minority group in society, their identity and privacy should be respected and not be exposed to possible marginalization within the society they confined themselves.

“Research Ethics” refers to a wide variety of values, norms and institutional arrangements that help constitute and regulate scientific activities.” The National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and Humanities (NESH) in its publication on “A Guide to Internet Research Ethics” outlines ethical standards that researchers must follow in their works to ensure professionalism. “Research ethics is a codification of scientific morality in practice”, it must be based on general ethics of science, General ethics is based on commonsense morality. “The participant should not be exploited or harmed in any way” (NESH 2016:5) First of all, I will officially write to the management of all the state institutions that I will engage in my research to inform them about the project and ask for permission well in advance to find a suitable date, the time I will visit the facility for such work.

After meeting all the conditions, I will engage the participants through interviews by recording and later transcribing them to appreciate the issues from proper perspectives.

As a Master's Student, I should ensure that the rights and privacy of individual respondents or interviewees must be respected and protected through the collection of data since research can sometimes be intrusive during data gathering. For this reason, I ensured that participants

remained anonymous by concealing their real names and assigning pseudo-names to them. Also, I met the rights, interests and sensitivities of respondents by informing them of their right to withdraw from participating in the interview and their right to not disclose sensitive information when they felt so. Researchers must also endeavour to explain the aims and objectives of the project to the participants because it's their right to know. The research must be done in accordance with the Universities and Colleges Act 2005 [2017] Data collected by researchers through the research must not be abused for any financial gains without the prior approval or permission of the respondents in accordance with "Research Ethics Act 2017 [2006] Personal Data Act§19, 20, 23 and 24.2018, The Norwegian Constitution, Intellectual Property Act".

Laws and regulations such as the Public Administration Act, 1967 e.g., § 13, confidentiality issues as stipulated in the Health Research Act 2008, Cultural Heritage Act, and Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 must all be respected to ensure the quality of work without any public backlash and possible imprisonment. Scientific misconduct is defined as falsification, fabrication, plagiarism and other serious breaches of good scientific practice that have been committed willfully or through gross negligence when planning, carrying out or reporting on research. (Act of 30 June 2006 No. 56 on ethics and integrity in research, changed 28.04.2017).

CHAPTER FOUR

Empirical Findings of the Labour Market Integration process: Experiences and reflections

Introduction

As indicated earlier, this qualitative study tries to understand the integration process of highly-skilled refugees who have obtained a good paid job in the Norwegian labour market and associated challenges as mentioned in the introduction (see Chapter One).

The study's main objective is to examine the major obstacles that refugees face in finding employment in Norway. In this chapter, I will highlight the labour market integration of the participants in the following pointers.

- What were their aspirations?
- How did they obtain their first job?
- What is the current work-life situation?
- Having a paid job - does that equate to being integrated in the Norwegian society?

Labour market aspirations upon arrival in Norway

Often, highly skilled refugees who want to resume their disrupted careers (Bygnes, 2021; Mozeti, 2020), frequently encounter a number of institutional barriers trying to do so. There have been several policy attempts to address these issues, but their efficacy varies from country to country. For instance, many highly trained refugees, especially those in regulated professions like doctors, lawyers and teachers, struggle to get recognition for their prior education and talents, and often have to take their education anew if they want to practice their profession in the new institutional context where they have settled (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2007; Morrice, 2009; Smyth & Kum, 2010).

The participants had their set of childhood dream and aspirations before stepping foots in Norway due to protracted conflicts and disturbances in their countries of origin. Despite the childhood dreams of most participants did not come through, but are satisfied with what they ended up with the job they obtained. For example, Aziza dreamt of becoming a journalist but she later ended up at an organization seeking to better the lives of minority groups in Norway.

Aziza said... “Being a journalist was my dream since I was six years because I had a brother who was a journalist and I liked it and my dream was to be a top journalist but they discourage me from pursuing it due to language barrier”

Despite Aziza’s dream did not come through as a journalist, she is happy and satisfied with the kind of job she does which influence decision and policy making in society.

Others adjust their career goals and use their transferable skills to find alternative employment, sometimes in lower-qualified positions (Povranovi Frykman, 2012; Pitka-Nykaza, 2015; Willott & Stevenson, 2013), while some people are adamant about returning to their former profession despite a number of obstacles. Is this maybe more suitable to use in concluding parts of the chapter? Instead of giving away your points too early? It could be wise to tell the story of how it ends later in the text. Instead of telling it right away.

Another participant Aarifa, also had ambitions of becoming a medical doctor but she ended up becoming a social worker at one of the municipalities.

Aarifa said....“When I was a kid, my dream was of becoming a doctor because that was what my dad wanted me to do. It was a neat profession in Africa. I wanted to work with children. But I am now working with youth and not like a doctor as I wanted but I am very satisfied with the work I do now”.

Despite her satisfaction, Aarifa is looking forward in the future to work more globally i.e., other countries and continents such as Africa and different places to impact in the lives of others globally.

Much research (Gateley, 2015; Hirano, 2014, 2015; Kanno & Varghese, 2010) concentrate on the difficulties that refugees experience when they prepare for or pursue higher education.

According to Loic Menzies’s analysis of the aspirations of underprivileged individuals, found that while these individuals had great aspirations but, they frequently lacked the connections and expertise necessary to offer trustworthy advice on how to realize those goals (Menzies, L. 2013).

On her part, Kinyarwanda had an aspiration of becoming a lawyer or journalist as a profession but she ended up becoming a consultant at a welfare administration. She is satisfied with her current profession and job...

Kinyarwanda said “This is not my dream job, but I am satisfied with the job I do now. Initially, I wanted to become a journalist or a lawyer. I have never regretted that, I enjoyed it”

According to Brücker et al., 2016), empirical investigations have revealed that migrants have high goals in terms of education (Brücker, Rother, & Schupp, 2016; Stevenson & Willott, 2007). The desire for greater career opportunities and increased money are major motivators to help fight poverty and help families in both the place of origin and the host nation (Harris & Marlowe, 2011; Stevenson & Willott, 2007). As the cornerstone for establishing a new life in the host nation, higher education is described (Hannah, 1999).

Another participant, Zebunissa said wanted to be an ophthalmologist but ended up working as a laboratory technician/scientist. However, she expressed her satisfaction with the profession as it gives her the opportunity to interact with a lot of people. In our conversation, Zebunissa stressed that...

“When I was a child, I wanted to be an ophthalmologist to look after patients with such conditions. I was going to study medical in my country of origin to become an eye doctor but I ended up working as a laboratory technician/scientist”

High-skilled immigrants' integration experiences are influenced by both their educational background and the interruptions to their lives brought on by flight and uncertainty during the asylum-seeking process (Mozeti, 2020 in this special issue). Their objectives, experiences, and outcomes in the job market are all influenced by this particular set of circumstances.

Some studies (Baker et al., 2017; Zeus, 2011) also include case studies of certain support structures as examples.

On other hand, Adebanke said she had an aspiration of becoming a fashion designer but she ended up working with a job relating education she acquired in Norway. During the interview, Adebanke said....

.... “I have always dream of being a fashion designer as my number one profession, but what I am doing now is a job that I feel like it goes with my education [qualification] in Norway and I enjoyed [satisfied] working with it. I studied Community development and social innovation which includes all disciplines so I am okay”

According to the participant’s account, she had plans of becoming a global icon in fashion designing. However, she ended up working as a social worker in the community. Also, another

participant, Ibrahim said he was practicing as a dentist but was forced to change it due to how volatile and the nature of job market in Norway.

According to him “I studied dentistry and worked as a surgeon in my country of origin but I ended up working as a translator and journalist in Norway.”

Some scholars, including Carling (2002) are of the opinion that the idea of migration aspirations and how they relate to life aspirations was further developed? I do not understand the sentence (Carling, J. R. 2002). According to Carling, migration aspirations can be thought of as projects for creating a life that serve to realize more general aspirations, like getting a better education or earning more money. Later, Carling and Collins (2018) recommended going beyond the typical meaning of the word or concept? aspirations, which relates it to others like one’s goals or plans they seek to attain. Aspirations also refers to the social foundations of a person's decision-making and includes both the cognitive and emotional aspects of judgment.

In other words, aspirations are more than just the result of rational decision-making; they also reflect affective reactions to opportunities and limitations, social interactions, and the potential for self-transformation. If we are to comprehend how migrants construct and pursue particular life paths, it is crucial that we explore the diverse nature of ambitions and their embeddedness in social environments. Despite being happy or satisfied with the various kinds of jobs the participants are currently doing in their respective fields, majority of them in a way have deviated from their childhood dreams and aspirations due to the labour market environment in which they found themselves as compared to their countries of origin. While individuals may set out to amass wealth or resources in order to realize their dreams or positive aspirations, social occurrences may take place along the way that force them to react by drawing on these resources in an effort to cope with adversity, disaster, or physical impairment that occurs before achieving the goal (Guribye, Sandal, & Oppedal 2011). In other words, because life presents people with unexpected possibilities and difficulties along the line, they are never totally able to forecast how events will turn out in their lives and must react as a result, its sometimes difficult to predict the future.

Obtaining the first paid job

According to Calmfors et al. (2019), and previous research has demonstrated that refugees' abilities, and employment chances can all suffer from inadequate or poor-quality schooling

(Calmfors et al. 2019). Another research also collaborated with Calmfors et al. (2019) notion that refugees with less education have lower employment rates than those with more education, according to 2019 research by the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Agency (NAV). The survey revealed that, the employment rate for refugees with a college degree is 63%, compared to only 19% for those with only a primary education (NAV, 2019). Similar findings were made by Norwegian Social Research (NOVA) in their 2020 study, which discovered that education had a significant impact on how well refugees fare in the Norwegian labour market. According to the study, refugees with higher education levels are more likely to find employment and earn greater pay than those with lower education levels (NOVA, 2020).

Some previous studies also suggest that some of the highly skilled refugees and other types of immigrants are overqualified for the jobs they do (Hardoy and Schøne, 2014). Also, having education in Norway is associated with better results in the labour market even if the education acquired in Norway is at a lower level than the education, they had from their country of origin that they arrived with (Bratsberg et al., 2017). According to other studies, this is simply because acquiring language skills as well as a formal Norwegian education, increases refugees' competences and working, which makes them attractive to employers and more competitive with other groups of immigrants. Overall, the various research indicates that education is quite important for refugees' career prospects in Norway. Thus, it is crucial for decision-makers and other stakeholders to fund education and training initiatives that can assist refugees in acquiring the abilities and understanding required to be successful in the Norwegian job market.

In the following section, I will explore the strategies adopted by the participants in this study when trying to obtain their very first paid job in Norway. Some participants in this study adopted strategies such as the use of network through family relations, use of network through voluntarism, sending formal job applications for employment among others.

In the following section, I will analyze the participants' accounts of their experiences in securing their first jobs. At this stage, they had recently settled in Norway, acquired some proficiency in the Norwegian language, were able to communicate in English, and were enthusiastic about initiating their career paths and earning a livelihood.

Use of Network via the Introduction Programme

The origin and the use of the phrase “Social Network” is attributed to Barnes (1954) who, in a study on a Norwegian fisherman's village, tried to give an account of the friendly and familiar relations that the inhabitants had partly built. According to Barnes' (Barnes (1954) patterns of

social relationships were not easily explained by more traditional social units such as extended families or work groups. Much of the early work on social networks was exploratory and descriptive. Homogenous networks, networks with more reciprocal linkages and networks with closer geographical proximity were also more effective in providing affective and instrumental support (Israel, 1982; Berkman and Glass, 2000). In other words, networks that are closer to each other are very effective in assisting or supporting their fellows within a given society or settings. According to Marshall and Scott (2005: 444), the term network refers to individuals with a collective goal that are linked together through social relationships. Spicker (2000a:23), also argues that the relationships within groups of people are sometimes referred to as a “network”. Burt (1992) quoted in Korczynski Ibid, 286) believe that people with extensive networks are better able to gather information together and have influence at work to enhance their career prospects.

In this study, some of the participants shared that they obtained their first paid job through the use of personal network that they obtained in the introduction programme.

Aziza came to Norway in 2005 with her brother when she was between 18-19 years said“I got my first job [cleaning job] at a Training Center through a friend I met at the introduction programme. The Somalian friend I met through networking was relocating from one municipality to another one, so he asked me to replace him at the job place”.

Aziza, who was affected by prolonged conflict in her home country that made it impossible for her to further her studies in such an environment had spent one year in Norway and did not yet speak and write Norwegian fluently when she obtained her first paid job as a cleaner. The job consisted of having to clean the training center every day for two (2) hours but the task of cleaning was difficult for her due to her inexperience as a cleaner.

The Introduction Act helps refugee and other types of immigrants to find foothold in the Norwegian labour market. Some participants of the programme used it as a catalyst to build long lasting friendships in order to obtain paid jobs during and after the training. All the participants benefited from the Norwegian Introduction Programme (NIP) run by various municipalities across Norway. In 2003, the Norwegian government launched NIP, which consists mainly of language and on-the-job training similar to that provided through traditional Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMPs). Djuve (2011) argues that this fairly sharp deviation from previous integration policy can be explained by a combination of critical-

juncture and path-dependency theory (Pierson, 2000), alongside theories of policy learning and the importance of ideas. The objective of labour market measures is to qualify and/or provide work training to enhance their employability or to start an education and reduce the likelihood of having to depend on the social security system (Calmfors, 1994).

The program is the most important public measure for newly arrived refugees in Norway. Under the Introduction Act, all refugees and their reunited family members between 18 and 55 years of age are entitled and obliged to participate in the IP within two years of obtaining their residency. This applies from September 1, 2004, for anyone who became a resident as of September 1, 2003, or later (Hardoy, I., & Zhang, T. (2019), IMDi 2022 introduksjonsloven fra 2003. (The Integration Act) “The aim of the Integration Act is for more people to gain a permanent foothold in Norwegian working life. The gap between what each individual brings with them and the need on the labour market must be filled and clear targets will be set for refugees and the municipalities” (IMDi 2022).

The law exempts those who "do not need basic qualifications", such as people who go straight into paid work or ordinary education, or people who for medical or social reasons are unable to take advantage of the program. In addition, one can take paid leave from IP in case of illness or birth. About 65 to 70 percent of refugees and their reunited family members participate in IP (Joyce, 2017).

In the Scandinavian countries such as Denmark, Norway and Sweden in recent decades, the number of migrants and the percentage of the population born outside the European Union (EU) and the European Economic Area (EEA) have increased substantially (Djuve & Grødem, 2014). Refugees have struggled to find a foothold in local labour markets despite full legal access to the labour market and significant integration efforts. Participation rates increase with duration of residence but in most refugee groups they remain significantly lower than among natives (Djuve AB, Grødem, 2014). Are activation measures intended mainly to curb rights or to increase employability through social investment (Larsen, 2005).

After cleaning the facility for over a year [Aziza], later left the job at one municipality and relocated to another municipality in attempts to get better employment options. Upon her arrival in Bergen, she later got a new job offer at the Old Age Homes for Aged Elderly Seniors People as a cleaner. Despite the difficulties associated with cleaning, after four (4) years of cleaning she later bought a house with the husband. The two shared the cost of the house 50/50 (fifty percent by each).

Aziza wanted a new challenge or job, she later quit the cleaning job and walked to one of the social welfare administration's offices in Norway in search of a new job. They offered her a job as a receptionist and later got 50% administration job contract at the same place. While working, she picked up some courses at the university to upgrade herself and CV. That is how Aziza entered the labour market in Norway.

Since then, Aziza has worked in several government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) as a consultant and served on several boards as a member. She has also established her own NGO to provide to help immigrants and minority groups to become part of the workforce through entrepreneurship. The NGO also help in empowering, inspire, and enable immigrant entrepreneurs to support one another and build their networks in order to promote immigrant entrepreneurship.

She is currently happily works as the leader of works at multicultural organization that provide counselling, cultural, and professional events for adults, children, and families with immigrant origins in Norway.

Use of Network Through Family Relations

Family relationships have been identified as a crucial resource for refugees looking for jobs in Norway, Europe and around the world. According to several research, family members can give migrants emotional support and access to information about career opportunities and the labour market. According to research by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), social and family networks play a crucial role in easing the integration of refugees into the labour market. The study also emphasizes the value of using community-based strategies to assist refugees in creating these networks and using them to their advantage for job prospects (IOM, 2018). Similar to this, a study by the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) discovered that refugees with family members who have already settled in the United States of America (USA) are more likely to obtain employment and earn more than those without such ties. Additionally, the report emphasizes how community-based groups help refugees integrate into the labour market (MPI, 2015). It is crucial to keep in mind, though, that relying primarily on family connections to get work can also have drawbacks, such as perpetuating inequality and limiting chances for people without established networks. Consequently, policies and initiatives intended to encourage refugee employment should concentrate on developing networks and skills at both the individual and community levels while also tackling structural impediments

to employment (IOM, 2018). In Europe, a study by Esser and Wieczorek (2018) that examined data from the European Social Survey, refugees in Europe who have family members in their personal networks were more likely to be employed than those who did not. According to the authors, having family ties can give migrants access to information about work prospects and the European labour market as well as emotional support and encouragement (Esser & Wieczorek 2018). Similar findings were made by Gorbacheva and Agadjanian in their 2019 study, which argues that family connections were a valuable tool for refugees looking for work in Europe. The authors pointed out that relatives can give refugees access to information about employment opportunities and the European labour market as well as provide them with physical and emotional assistance when conducting a job search (Gorbacheva & Agadjanian, 2019). Another study conducted in 2003 study by Jacobsen and Landau that looked at the experiences of immigrants in Europe discovered that family relationships were a crucial component in their effective integration into the job market. The authors pointed out that family members might offer migrants psychological support, motivation, and access to information about job openings and the European labour market (Jacobsen & Landau 2003).

In the Norwegian context, family ties have been noted as a valuable resource for refugees looking for jobs in Norway. According to research, family members can give refugees emotional support and access to information about work opportunities and the Norwegian labour market. Research conducted by Henriksen and Kavli's (2015) revealed that refugees in Norway who have family members in their personal networks had a higher employment rate than those who did not. Family members may be able to offer refugees moral support, words of encouragement, and details about available jobs and the Norwegian labour market, according to the authors (Henriksen & Kavli 2015). Similar findings were observed by Bevelander and Pendakur (2014), who discovered that refugees in Norway who had familial connections to their personal networks were more likely to find job than those who did not. In addition to social support and encouragement, the authors emphasized that family relationships might give refugees access to information about job openings and the Norwegian labour market (Bevelander and Pendakur 2014). Moreover, Rye and Larsen's (2015) research revealed that family relationships were crucial for refugees and other migrants in Norway who encountered severe work difficulties like language problems. The authors pointed out that family members can offer refugees access to career prospects, practical assistance with job searches, and emotional support (Rye & Larsen 2015). These studies collectively imply that family connections can be a valuable tool for refugees looking for jobs in Norway. Family members can offer encouragement and emotional support, as well as access to information on job

openings and the Norwegian labour market, all of which can be helpful to refugees as they try to figure out how to negotiate the challenging process of seeking work in a foreign country. According to (Kadushin 2004), social network theory can be used in a variety of levels of analysis from small groups to entire global systems (Kadushin, C. 2004 p1). In a developed or a developing country with growing uncertainties within the labour market and hidden rules, individuals including refugees and other type immigrants need personal connections or friends to facilitate navigating the system (Yueh, 2009). Without the support of social networks, it will be extremely difficult to survive self-employment or find a job, (Granovetter, 1973; Bayer et al., 2008), stronger ties are always necessary for individuals to thrive during job seeking. While some participants used networking through the introduction programme; others got help from family relationships such as Aarifa who through his brother's friend she got her first paid job as a cleaner.

Aarifa came to Norway in 1999 at the age of 22 years. As a student, she came to participate in a student festival in one of the municipalities in Norway but, she later decided to seek an asylum due to conflict in the home country in North Africa because she was afraid of being killed through gunshots and other disturbances as a result of historic conflict. She was studying Veterinary Sciences at second level in the University but had to remain in Norway for safety reasons.

According to the 45-year-old female Aarifa,.....

.....“I had my first paid job as a cleaner through my brother's friend. So, I accepted the offer to clean for her because I actually needed some money, so I used to clean the residence once a week”.

The participant had her first paid job through her relation's network, she used to clean at his brother's friend residence once each week, she used to clean for three (3) hours and she got paid for it.

Referrals from close relatives or friends can be quite helpful for one to integrate into the workforce, according to many academics, Rees and Schultz (1970), Corcoran et al. (1980), Holzer (1988), Blau and Robbins (1990), Blau (1992), Granovetter (1995), Addison and Portugal (2001) and Wahba and Zenou (2003) everyone, using the U.S., Europe, and other continents as examples, emphasized the value of informal hiring channels such referrals from close friends and family members. After working for a year, due to her hard work as a cleaner, the brother's friend who was then working as a nurse at a nursing home for the elderly people invited her to apply at the working which she later got the job. Aarifa needed the job in addition

to the existing cleaning job she was doing at the residence, she wrote the application letter and the nurse delivered it on her behalf. When she had the job on contract basis, the contract later expired but she got an extension and later became permanent job for her. This is how the participant [Aarifa] entered into the labour market in Norway through family relationships or network unlike [Aziza] who got her first paid job through a friend at the introduction programme.

A number of studies including Holzer (1988) and Blau and Robbins (1990) find that informal referrals are more productive than more formal methods in terms of job offer and acceptance probabilities. Additional studies including Datcher (1983), Devine and Kiefer (1991), Marmaros and Sacerdote (2002), and Loury (2004) find evidence that use of informal networks increases the quality of the match as captured by job tenure or earnings. However, evidence from existing studies suggest that the use of social networks varies across demographic groups in a new environment. Glanz, K., Rimer, B. K., & Viswanath, K. (2008). Various sociological and social psychological theories such as exchange theory, attachment theory, and symbolic interactionism have been used to explain the basic interpersonal processes that underline the association between social relationships and health (Berkman, Glass, Brissette, and Seeman, 2000). The structure of social networks can be described in terms of dyadic characteristics (that is, characteristics of specific relationships between the focal individual and other people in the network) and in terms of characteristics of the network as a whole (Israel, 1982; House, Umberson, and Landis, 1988).

Use of Personal Network

The utilization of social capital, or personal networks, has been found to be a successful method for refugees to find gainful employment. Many studies that looked at how personal networks affected refugees' employment results lend weight to this notion. A study by Bevelander and Pendakur (2014) discovered that refugees with more extensive personal networks had a higher employment rate than those with smaller networks. According to the authors, personal networks could give migrants access to information about employment openings and act as a source of social support and motivation. (Bevelander & Pendakur 2014). Also, Block and Webb (2001) conducted yet another study in which they looked at the impact of social networks on Somali immigrants' employment experiences in the United States of America (USA). Personal networks were shown to be extremely important in assisting refugees to successfully navigate the challenging process of locating employment in a new nation. Personal networks in particular helped refugees build their job-searching abilities and provided them with

emotional support and information about career chances (Block & Webb 2001). In Norway, a study by Olsen and Røed (2016) looked at how refugees in Norway used their personal networks. They discovered that these networks were especially crucial for refugees who faced severe occupational challenges including language problems or a lack of formal schooling. The survey also discovered that immigrants with larger personal networks had a higher chance of landing a job. Furthermore, the research revealed that for migrants who suffer substantial career challenges including language problems or a lack of formal education, personal networks can be especially crucial. The authors discovered that despite these obstacles, immigrants with greater personal networks had a higher chance of landing a job (Olsen and Røed 2016). Another study by Rye and Larsen (2015) examined the part that personal networks had in the employment experiences of migrants in Norway. The authors discovered that personal networks were crucial in assisting refugees in getting over employment hurdles like language problems and a lack of knowledge with the Norwegian labour market. The study also discovered that the effectiveness of personal networks, including the degree of linkages between network members, played a significant role in the job results of immigrants. (Rye & Larsen, 2015). Overall, these studies indicate that personal networks might be quite important in assisting refugees in finding gainful employment. Personal networks can give refugees access to information, job-search expertise, and emotional support—all of which can be helpful in navigating the challenging process of seeking employment in a new country.

According to (Case and Given 2016) and (Harris and Dewdney 1994), people prefer informal information sources, such as family and friends, over formal ones when looking for solutions to a variety of topics, which appears to be a fairly universal finding. A new study by (Teixeira and Drolet 2018), argues that immigrants can get a lot of help from their established networks of ethnic relatives and friends, particularly when it comes to finding accommodation and a job. Several studies on immigrants' information needs and job seeking show that newcomers especially refugees and those with minority backgrounds frequently rely on their family, friends, and personal networks (e.g., Allard, 2015; Esses et al., 2013b; Khoir, 2016; Komito and Bates, 2011; Lingel, 2011) for information about how to settle in a new country (Shuva, 2022). According to (Guilmoto & Sandron 2001), close networks play a significant role in one's migration and integration processes. According to several academics, the decision-making process for the job market is facilitated by friends or close networks simply because they give the potential immigrant appropriate and helpful information that would be challenging to gain otherwise.

The term "personal network" refers to the connections and intimate friends that informants have that allow them to enter the workforce without having to use the network of someone else in their larger network. The importance and the functioning of personal networks can change based on the size of informal networks (cf. Calvó-Armengol & Zenou 2005) and their influence in finding a job in different countries and cultures.

Lamba (2008) emphasizes the detrimental effects of refugees' lack of social networks with the local population, suggesting that their social networks in Canada, which primarily consist of their family members and friends, have not been as effective in helping them find respectable employment. There appears to be a significant absence of social interaction between refugees and Norwegians, as it is also emphasized in other studies. For instance, the results of Djuves research on multi-nationality 40 percent of Tamils, according to Hauf and Vaglum (1997, p. 413) and Hagen (1995), Kurds, Iranians, Somalis, Chileans, Vietnamese, and those who have resided in Norway for six to seven years had no communication with a Norwegian over the previous 12 months. Some of the participant's personal network connections which consist of friends, close associates and other personal relations within its closet played a major role for them in the job market.

Apart from [Aarifa], another participant Chéckina also got her first paid job through her personal network. Chéckina arrived in Norway in 2006 at the age of 16 years. She lost her both parents through the deadly conflict. She fled from a conflict zone with the uncle from a country within Central Africa which was experiencing war over the past 27 years. The participant was a "refugee" in her own country for over ten (10) years. She left her native country at the age of six, alternating between neighbouring countries such as Burundi, Malawi, Tanzania, Kenya for shelter. She left all her 6 siblings in her country of origin. The participant was studying at the High School level in her home country.

... "I got my first and second paid jobs through my close network" the 35-year-old Chéckina who arrived in Norway at the age of 16-years said.

... "When I came, I just ask people for job, I didn't even know Norwegian, I ask the teacher, do you have a job for me? [.....] and that's how I got my first job as a cleaner. At my first job, I was cleaning an office near the city".

She used to travel from one city to another city to clean every morning to earn a living as a teenager. While working at her first place, Chéckina needed more income so she asked friends

if they could assist her to get additional job to earn more income to satisfy her needs and wants in Norway.

...“I was talking to a friend and I informed her that I need a job, a little bit more because the one I have is not enough, so all the jobs I have had so far, it's through my network, it's around me. That's all, I do not apply for a job I got it through my network” says Chéckina

Chéckina got a second job simply because she needed more hours and thus more salary.

Per Chéckina's account, she embraced all kinds of jobs without being selective of jobs or opportunities that came to her way as part of her integration into the labour market in Norway. She further stated that...

“It's been easier, I think maybe it is because of my personality and I am thinking, because I am not ashamed or shy to ask of jobs, and I don't look down on any kinds of jobs I get or that comes to my way”

Along the line, she got a new job as a teacher. Due to her passion, experience and background in Intercultural/multicultural studies and anthropology, she got a new job as a social studies teacher through her network, a job she applied for and later got it.

Base on the experiences shared, Chéckina used her personal network or friends to enter the labour market in Norway unlike other participants who used other means to enter the labour market. Judging from the beginning, her pathways into the labour market has been smooth based on her thoughts and experiences shared. The participant is now satisfied with her income as she is earning more than enough money through the work she does. “I make enough of money; I was even in trouble last year; I didn't pay enough tax so I have to pay about eighty thousand [80,000kr] Norwegian Kroners” Chéckina said the money she makes is sufficient for her expenditure.

When asked if she feels fully integrated into the labour market, Chéckina stated that “Yes, I feel integrated, am even scared that I would be assimilated”. The job she does is also in line with her education or qualifications she obtained in Norway upon arrival as a refugee. Apart from Chéckina, other participants including Kinyarwanda also obtained their first paid job through her network [friend] as will be elaborated in the following

Use of close friends or associates

There is evidence to show that refugees in Norway may be able to leverage on their personal networks, including their close friends, to assist in finding jobs. It has been discovered that personal networks, which include intimate friends, family, and acquaintances, are important sources for refugees looking for job in Norway. According to a 2015 study by Henriksen and Kavli, migrants in Norway with close friends in their personal networks were more likely to find job than those without such relationships. In addition to offering advice about career opportunities and the Norwegian labour market, the authors noted that close friends can also offer emotional support and encouragement (Henriksen & Kavli, 2015). Similar findings were made by Rye and Larsen (2015) in their study of refugees in Norway, who discovered the value of personal networks, particularly for individuals who had substantial occupational difficulties including language problems. The authors made the observation that close friends can offer refugees crucial social support as well as access to information about employment openings and assistance with job searches (Rye and Larsen, 2015). Also, a 2014 study by Bevelander and Pendakur discovered that Norwegian refugees who had ties to their personal networks, such as close friends, through their ethnicity were more likely to get job than those who did not. Ethnic connections, according to the authors, can give refugees access to information about employment opportunities and the Norwegian labour market as well as social support and encouragement (Bevelander & Pendakur, 2014). Overall, the findings of these research collectively imply that close friends may be crucial members of the personal networks of refugees looking for jobs in Norway. Close friends can offer emotional support and access to information on job openings and the Norwegian labour market, both of which can be crucial in assisting refugees in navigating the challenging process of seeking employment in a new country.

While some participants used groups such as family relations, social or close networks and formal job applications to obtained paid employment, another participant Kinyarwanda obtained hers through friendship. According to Kinyarwanda...

... "I got my first paid job through my friend's [network] recommendation as a cleaner at a hotel. I had a friend who was working at the hotel and she informed me that her office is looking for people to work at her work place and I got my first paid job there. My first job in Norway, I was cleaning at the hotels, I would come from class and go down, wash and go home".

As Portes (2000) also mentions, on a similar note, in the case of recently arrived migrants in American society, scholars emphasize the importance of social networking regarding career development, particularly for refugees who struggle to integrate and enter the labour markets of their host countries for the first time. Lin (2017) asserts that the fundamental building blocks of social capital are social networks and social ties among and within individuals and groups. According to Portes (2000), social capital can be simply defined as strong ties/bonds between people, notwithstanding its complexity and variety of uses. More specifically, Lin (2017, p. 6) defines social capital as "an investment in social interactions with projected rewards," quoting Lin (2001).

Kinyarwanda came to Norway in 2002 through the *UNHCR* resettlement arrangement at the age of 20-years old. She came with the boyfriend of whom they later got married as couples in Norway. She came from a country within East Africa where a protracted civil war between ethnic groups that begun in 1959 has claimed the lives of close to a million innocent lives. Accordingly, the extent of one's informal networks and their impact on job search in various nations and cultures, personal networks' significance and effectiveness can vary (Calvó-Armengol & Zenou 2005).

After securing her first paid job at the hotel as a cleaner, Kinyarwanda who was heavily pregnant for four months with her second born quit the job to concentrate on her pregnancy and the safety of the baby.

Subsequently, the participant delivered the baby and she needed a new job to make some earnings to support her family, she then had another job where she was taking care of the elderly people at a nursing home. Later on, another friend within her network informed her about a vacancy at the Welfare administration and she applied for it, she later went for an interview and got the job. After securing that job at the administration office, Kinyarwanda informed her management of the elderly home to give her some days off to start her new job which the permission was granted to her. After arriving at her new place, she was offered a one-year contract with an option to extend it if management is satisfied by her output.

Kinyarwanda said..... "I started looking for a real job, after the baby went to the day care, a friend introduced me to a vacancy at the Welfare administration office, I applied and went for an interview and had the job. They gave me one-year contract with an option to extend. Whiles working, they later gave me permanent employment contract, that is where I am working now"

According to Kinyarwanda..... “Those are two jobs, right? Two jobs that I have been recommended by my network or friends” The participant believes that her network helped in securing all the jobs she had upon arriving including her current full time she is doing as a consultant at one of the welfare administration’s offices in Norway.

According to [Granovetter’s] foundational work Granovetter (1973, 1983), distinguished between strong and weak social links (i.e., close friends or family vs. acquaintances), which helped shape much of the economic and sociological thinking about job-finding networks. Weak social linkages, which bring fresh information about job openings between agents with diverse information sets, are key labour market factors, according to Granovetter's research. Some of the recent empirical research on job-finding networks based on registration data, where networks are frequently characterized through neighborhoods or shared immigrant history, has also focused on the "strength of weak ties" theory.

Yet, other areas of the network literature have emphasized the value of strong social relationships, and these strong ties should be especially important for young employees who are about to enter the workforce. According to Boorman (1975), hired agents communicate information about job openings to their close friends first and only to weaker acquaintances if their close friends are already employed. This route, which may be viewed as a sort of nepotism through insider knowledge, may be especially significant in situations where social ties connect young workers who are having trouble finding their first jobs. Montgomery (1991) proposes a new route in a model of employee selection where businesses decide to hire in order to identify suitable workers when ex-ante knowledge regarding worker quality is lacking, workers with social ties to productive existing employees are needed. This precondition is especially likely to be important for young, untested workers.

The greater the links between the workers are, the more sense this argument may make since it is predicated on the assumption that good workers associate with other good workers. Monitoring is one justification for businesses to use networks for hiring. In specifically, Heath (2013) offers a model where the referrer is penalized if the referred employee acts badly (see also the model in Dhillon, Iversen, and Torsvik, 2013). Strong social links between these actors are necessary to motivate the latter to put out effort.

Job finding networks are crucial in situations when the prospective employee is new to the labour market but job finding networks serve as means for exchanging information between (potential) workers and firms.

Despite some refugees struggled with networking with Norwegian natives to facilitate their integration into the labour market, others used network such as friends, family members to get

jobs to do. Although many jobs in Norway are filled informally, Liebig also highlighted this issue as a barrier to employment for immigrants (Liebig, 2009b).

Research from Sweden also implies that informal networks, rather than official ones, are more frequently employed for job searching during economic downturns (Behtoui 2008).

Lack of networks, which effectively creates a structural barrier to employment, could be one cause. Despite the fact that immigrants also have networks, these networks are more likely to be focused among members of their native communities, which tends to restrict their employment options. Networks are crucial for gaining access to employment, but there hasn't been a thorough investigation of this topic for Norway yet. According to data from Sweden, up to two thirds of all job openings were filled through informal contacts (Behtoui 2008).

According to Hagtvet (2005), only approximately 40% of all positions in Norway have been publicly advertised before being filled. This number takes into account the public sector, where companies are generally required to post any openings with a length of more than six months. The usage of informal means in the Norwegian labour market can be inferred from the fact that only a small percentage of private sector openings are advertised; the number thus appears to be comparable to that seen in Sweden. It is interesting to note that networks appear to be more crucial for low-skilled jobs than for high-skilled jobs when it comes to getting employment (Hagtvet 2005).

“... One strategy for overcoming the challenges caused by a lack of networks relevant to finding job and a lack of knowledge about how the labour market operates is to implement mentoring programs. The Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development countries have grown more and more accustomed to these programs. In recent years, it has been widely adopted, especially in France and Denmark.....In mentoring programs, immigrants are, to the extent possible, paired with native-born individuals who are comparable to them in terms of sex, age, and occupation. An individual who was born here gives the immigrant a rudimentary introduction to local customs, institutions, and other aspects of daily life. The mentor can help the immigrant take advantage of his or her personal network of contacts, and in some circumstances, the mentor may even serve as a middleman between the immigrant and possible employers. As the native population is involved, these programs are appealing to the host nations...” (see OECD 2009).

The mentors typically volunteer their time, which lowers the expense to the host nation even though they do receive special training to help them understand cultural differences and

expectations from immigrants. According to some research (see OECD 2007a and 2008c), mentoring can be a useful technique for helping immigrants integrate into the labour market. The OECD member countries are: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

Networking Through Volunteering

While others used family and friend relations to get paid employment, some participants also opted for volunteering as a strategy to enlarge their personal network and to get fresh experiences to include in their CV for future employment opportunities. Accordingly, networking through volunteering is typical tactic employed by refugees to get jobs is networking through voluntary work. Volunteering not only enables refugees to acquire new knowledge and experience, but it also facilitates their networking with possible employers and other experts in their field of interest. There are various programs in Norway that encourage refugees to participate in voluntary work. In order to match refugees with volunteer opportunities in their home areas, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) launched a program named "NRC Velferd" (NRC, n.d.). The Norwegian Red Cross has also started a project called "Refugee Guides," which teaches volunteers to assist refugees in their integration process in Norway (Norwegian Red Cross, n.d.). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) discovered in a study that volunteering can be a good approach for refugees to develop their social networks and increase their chances of landing a job. The report also emphasizes how crucial it is to give refugees chances to volunteer and the requirement for laws and programs that encourage refugee involvement in charitable endeavors (UNHCR, 2019). Similar findings were made in a report by the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA), which concluded that volunteering can be very helpful for refugees' integration, including getting them access to jobs. The research emphasizes how crucial it is to inform refugees about volunteer opportunities and to offer them assistance and training so they can participate effectively (RCOA, 2019). Additionally, study by the Australian Red Cross revealed that volunteering might assist host communities by fostering social cohesiveness and dispelling misconceptions about refugees (Australian Red Cross, 2018). As mentioned above,

volunteering has been mentioned as a possible route for refugees to widen their personal networks and raise their chances of getting a job in Norway. According to research, volunteering can aid refugees in acquiring crucial skills, gaining professional experience, and developing social networks that can be useful in their job hunt. The impact of volunteering on refugees' absorption into the Norwegian job market was investigated in a 2017 study by Teigen and Moe. The researchers discovered that volunteers had a higher chance of finding jobs than non-volunteers. According to the authors, volunteering can give migrants access to social networks, valuable work experience, and details about available employment prospects (Teigen & Moe 2017). Bollini, Siem, and Vestvik (2016) conducted a second study to examine the part that volunteering plays in helping refugees adjust to life in Norway. Volunteering, according to the authors, can assist refugees in forging meaningful ties with their local community while also assisting them in gaining valuable work experience and life skills. Volunteering, according to the authors, can also assist refugees in learning more about the Norwegian labour market and assimilating into the local way of life (Bollini, Siem, and Vestvik, 2016). In a similar vein, Brekke and Lien's (2017) research revealed that volunteering can aid refugees in forging social ties within their community, as well as allow them to strengthen their language abilities and get work experience. The authors made the case that volunteering can help refugees build the skills and ties to the community that will help them land jobs in Norway (Brekke & Lien 2017). Overall, these studies indicate that volunteering may be a significant strategy for refugees in Norway to broaden their social networks and raise the likelihood that they will land a job. Volunteering can give refugees access to social networks, useful work experience, and information about job openings that will help them in their employment quest. It appears that the nonprofit sector accomplishes two goals at once and policy makers now recognize that society engagement cannot be attained solely through employment and that immigrant integration in the labour market can be aided in this respect by the nonprofit sector through volunteerism (Stein & Fedreheim 2022). This is an international phenomenon; in 1997, the General Assembly of the United Nations "designated 2001 as the International Year of Volunteers (IYV) in recognition of the valuable contribution of voluntary activity in tackling global concerns." (United Nations General Assembly 2005). The UN Commission for Social Development stated that "volunteering constitutes an enormous reservoir of skills, energy, and local knowledge which can assist governments in carrying out more targeted, efficient, participatory, and transparent public programs and policies" (cited in Hodgkinson, *ibid.*) (Rochester 2006).

For example, Aarifa through volunteerism to gain the need network within the labour market space.

“While learning the Norwegian language, I had to of course, start to establish a network. So, I got engaging with the Red Cross for youth, the youth programme, and it was where I actually really kind of felt that I was included as a young person regardless of my background. I was the guest to participate in a lot of programs to gain network. So, it helped me to build my network” Aarifa said.

According to research (Chase & Clarke, 2015; Sinclair et al., 2018), volunteering can improve refugees' mental health, economic & social integration, and sense of belonging in the host nation.

“I was at everywhere, I was networking and there I was working, volunteering like that so it's actually helped me to get a job, because I got my first job before I finished my master degree because of the network i built through volunteerism to improve my CV and enhance my skills within the Norwegian labour market” ... Aziza.

Current Work Life

Situation and experiences (what is the signification of having their current job?)

Obtaining paid employment is of importance and essential for refugees and people with minority backgrounds for a variety of reasons, including the beneficial effects it can have on the person and the economy of the nation where they are living or the host country. Refugees obtaining employment gives them economic independence, integration and social cohesion, mental health and wellbeing, contributions to the economy. According to numerous studies, one of the most important elements in a refugee's ability to successfully integrate into the host country is having access to job (OECD, 2021).

For example, a study by the International Labour Organization (ILO) revealed that a job acquisition gives refugees a sense of financial freedom and aids in their development as self-sufficient individuals...[..] it can lessen their dependency on social welfare programs and minimize the economic pressure on the host nation (ILO, 2019).

Particularly for refugees who have gone through trauma and displacement, unemployment can have a detrimental effect on mental health and wellness. Having a job can provide you a sense of direction, structure, and routine, all of which are good for your mental health (UNHCR, 2021).

In this subtheme, I will present and analyze the current work life experiences of the participants and whether it correspond with their educational qualifications and also if it is a job, they dreamt about from childhood.

To start with Aarifa, who came from North Africa and aspired to work as a medical doctor [that's working with children] due to demands for health care workers in the sub-region, currently works as a social worker at the child welfare services in the country.

According to Aarifa... "I am currently a social worker and have a master's degree in Child Welfare and I am working in the child welfare services, so I am doing a job that correspond with qualification, [professional and my skills] and what I've studied, you know, and I also love doing it.

Aarifa is someone who aspired to work as a medical doctor, that's working with children or the youth. Despite being satisfied with her current job and what she does, Aarifa aspires more by engaging other organisations to use her skills differently to benefit a lot of youth. She is very passionate about working with people in different ways and she is planning of working globally in other continents such as Africa to give back to her people to make the parents and relatives happier.

Also, Mao Zedong who came from West Africa currently works at a Christian based NGO as a coordinator and also work at one of the municipalities assisting the elderly. He aspired to work as the Secretary General of the United Nations (UN) to champion humanitarian and human rights issues but is satisfied to work with an organization championing human rights issue now.

Mao Zedong also a card bearing member of socialize based party in Norway SV political party, a move he described as a strategic one to be influential and also to build network for opportunities. He currently runs a None-Governmental Organization (NGO) working on interculture and human rights issues and seeks to establish commercial business.

Also, Zebunissa stressed that... As of the time of the interview she, worked as a home carer in a refugee home, a job she obtained through her social network.

...“I am really pleased with my work. I don't think I would have even dream bigger than this in my country of origin. I was going to study medical to become an eye doctor.... This is much better because I get to teach and interact with people”

According to research by the International Rescue Committee (IRC), refugees who have been working for at least six months are more likely to be financially independent, have better mental health, and have higher levels of social integration.

In general, giving refugees access employment or access to the labour market is essential for their smooth integration and wellness as well as for the economy benefits of the host nation. By offering language and skill training, removing barriers to employment, and encouraging inclusive hiring practices, governments and organizations may significantly improve the chances that refugees will find employment (ILO, 2019).

Having a job – does that equate to being fully integrated?

The question of whether having a job equates to being fully integrated can be related to the theory of structural integration within refugee integration frameworks. According to this perspective, economic integration, such as employment, is an important aspect of integration but does not necessarily encompass all dimensions of integration. Within refugee integration frameworks, economic integration, such as having a job, is an essential component of the overall integration process. The theory acknowledges the significance of economic self-sufficiency and the ability to support oneself as key factors in successful integration. However, this theory emphasizes that economic integration alone does not equate to full integration. Integration encompasses various dimensions, including social, cultural, and psychological aspects. While employment is a crucial aspect of economic integration, it does not guarantee complete social inclusion, cultural adaptation, or a sense of belonging (Reitz & Banerjee, 2007). To achieve full integration, refugees also need to establish social connections, engage in community activities, access quality education and healthcare, have a voice in decision-making processes and experience acceptance within the host society. These additional dimensions of integration are vital for individuals to fully participate and contribute to their new communities. Therefore, while having a job is an important milestone in the integration process, it is only one piece of the puzzle. A comprehensive approach to integration should consider multiple dimensions and address the diverse needs and experiences of refugees beyond economic factors alone.

The term “integration” has emerged as a prominent topic of public debate as well as a major policy goal in relation to the resettlement of refugees and other migrants [...] but the fact that the term "integration" is employed with such a wide variety of interpretations puts both coherent policy formation and fruitful public discourse in jeopardy (Ager, & Strang 2008).

According to Robinson (1998: 118), "integration" is a chaotic notion that is employed by many people but is interpreted differently by the majority of them. Robinson sees little chance of a general definition, saying the idea is "individualized, contentious, and contextual" (ibid.). The same idea is shared by (Castles et al. 2001) that immigrant and refugee integration does not have a single, widely acknowledged concept, theory, or paradigm. The idea is still divisive and up for discussion.

On the other hand, the (European Commission 2004; Scottish Executive 2006; Frattini 2006; HMG 2007; Welsh Assembly Government 2006; USEU 2007), integration is important for initiatives working with refugees, both as a declared policy objective and as a targeted outcome. Despite a variety of divergent and complex opinions on integration and the significant "gap" in employment between natives and refugees, access to the labour market is increasingly seen as "the most critical ingredient in the successful integration of migrants" (Poptcheva & Stuchlik, 2015: X). Over the years, issues in relation to the resettlement of refugees and other migrants, integration has grown in importance as a governmental goal and as a topic of intense public debate (Ager & Strang 2008).

Within the frame of this increasing debate and opinions on the concept of integration, I asked the participants if having a paid job in Norway equate to being integrated in the Norwegian labour market and the society at large. Majority of the participants including Kinyarwanda see themselves as being integrated fully in Norwegian society.

Kinyarwanda sees herself as being integrated fully [100%] in Norwegian society.....

“I am hundred percent (100%) fully integrated; it is about having a job? *Is* integration having a job that is valued? It's being able to send your kids whatever they need to do to being able to travel on holidays. Yeah, being able to go skiing, being in the bank, walking in the rain in this country, but honestly, I consider myself I mean like a fully integrated, I have access to everything, like the health care, the schools. My boy [son] actually is in the military now, that is integrated”.

Kinyarwanda is of the opinion that since she has paid employment and access to all public services such as health, education and among others, most importantly for the son to be recruited into the Norwegian army, she sees herself as fully integrated.

Apart from Kinyarwanda, another participant Chéckina, who is confident of competing with native or ethnic Norwegians at all levels in the society asked rhetorical questions about what the term integration means in the Norwegian contest. Despite that, she sees herself as fully

integrated in the society. So, I asked her [...] as far as integration is concern, do you see yourself as fully integrated in Norway? [Chéckina] said...

“I feel like I can compete with the Norwegians on the same level. I feel integrated, I am even scared that I would be assimilated, if you ask Norwegians, what is integration, they don't know [...] do I have to eat potatoes? Does that mean, I am integrated and they say no, they always think when you have job then you're integrated, that's a biggest lie they tell. When Norwegians actually do say integrate, they mean assimilate [...] they say be as Norwegian as possible, that is integration in Norway”.

Assimilation refers to the process in which individuals from a minority or immigrant background are expected to adopt and conform to the dominant culture, often at the expense of their own cultural identity (Croucher & Kramer, 2017). The participant's fear of assimilation suggests a desire to maintain their own cultural identity while still being integrated into Norwegian society. The critique of Norwegian society revolves around the perception that the prevailing understanding of integration is synonymous with assimilation. The participant suggests that Norwegians view integration as striving to become as "Norwegian" as possible, often tied to conforming to certain cultural norms, such as eating potatoes. This critique implies a tension between the expectations placed on immigrants or refugees to assimilate and the potential erasure of their cultural backgrounds. It is important to acknowledge and respect the diversity of cultural identities and experiences within a society. Integration should ideally involve a two-way process that fosters mutual understanding, respect, and appreciation of different cultures, rather than solely expecting individuals to adopt the dominant culture. Critiques of the understanding of integration within a society can contribute to a broader discussion on how integration policies and practices can be more inclusive and supportive of diverse cultural identities. It highlights the need for a nuanced approach that recognizes and values the contributions and experiences of individuals from different backgrounds, while promoting social cohesion and equal opportunities for all members of society.

Integration of the large number of refugees that have lately joined numerous OECD countries is a top policy priority. Refugee integration is getting more and more attention for a number of reasons (Dumont & Georges 2005).

Another participant, Zebunissa also sees herself as someone who also is fully integrated in the Norwegian society since she has the right to enjoy all the amenity provided by the host country. When asked her about the same question of integration Zebunissa *said*...

“Sometimes I ask myself the same question of integration into the Norwegian society, yes, maybe if not fully like 90% percent since I don't go to skiing but of course I do walk, I know what happened in the country, I can participate in whatever I want to do, I know how to get things and I know the system”.

Per Zebunissa's account, she sees herself as someone who is ninety percent integrated into the Norwegian society because she has access to all the social and public amenities in the country. The participant said if integration is all about having been able to get employment and growth more social ties then she sees herself as being integrated economically and socially, she however questioned the real meaning of the term 'integration' as it has become cliché in Norway and the entire Europe.

According to (Djuve & Kavli 2019) the environment of reception may also prevent refugees from integrating economically, as protracted immigration and asylum processes impede early job searches. The "refugee gap" is substantially smaller for refugees who have been in the country for a long time, despite the fact that they arrive more slowly than other migrants (Bakker et al., 2017; Bevelander and Pendakur, 2014).

Apart from Zebunissa, Chéckina and Kinyarwanda, when Abednego ask another participant, ... [Do you feel fully integrated in Norway?

Mao Zedong answered....

“Sure, sure, in terms of working and getting salary is okay, I don't have a problem at all, since I came here, I haven't lived on a social welfare before. I have always worked, earning, bought my own place [House], I have my car, I have an NGO working with the United Nations (UN) and I have plans from next year [2023] to work on my own commercial business as well”

Majority of the participants who arrived in Norway as refugees sees themselves as being fully integrated into the Norwegian society due to the fact that they have the same rights and privileges as natives or citizens of Norway. Others belief that since they have access to good health system, quality education, decent jobs, houses, cars and access to all public institutions they consider themselves as fully integrated Norwegians as the indigenous people. The belief held by some participants that they are fully integrated into Norwegian society based on having the same rights, privileges, and access to various resources aligns with the theory of structural integration within refugee integration frameworks. According to this theory, access to essential

resources such as healthcare, education, employment, and housing are crucial elements of integration. It recognizes that economic and social rights are fundamental for individuals to be fully integrated into the host society. However, it is important to consider other dimensions of integration as well. The participants' perspective seems to emphasize the structural aspects of integration, focusing on material well-being and access to public institutions. While these factors are significant, other theories of integration, such as sociocultural integration theory, emphasize the importance of social connections, cultural adaptation, and a sense of belonging. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the participants' integration experiences, it would be beneficial to explore their social interactions, cultural integration, and feelings of acceptance within Norwegian society. Evaluating integration solely based on access to resources and rights may overlook the complexities of cultural integration and the formation of meaningful connections with the host society.

Does refugees' knowledge in English language increase their chances of getting paid employment?

Research by the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Agency found that the chances of employment for refugees with higher levels of Norwegian language competency were higher, the study further discovered that migrants who spoke both Norwegian and English were more likely to find jobs than those who just spoke Norwegian (Bakken & Engen, 2020).

The language ability is one of the most important characteristics for successful work among refugees in Norway, according to a survey by the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Agency (NAV). According to the survey, immigrants who spoke Norwegian or English well were more likely to obtain job, and language proficiency explained a sizable portion of the disparity in employment outcomes between refugees and immigrants who did not come from a refugee background ("Arbeidsmarkedet for flyktninger," NAV, 2019). Subsequent research by the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research revealed the importance of language skills for Norwegian social integration and network growth. According to the study, immigrants who spoke Norwegian or English well were more likely to interact with Norwegians and immigrants who were not refugees, as well as be involved in a variety of social activities. (Ref: "Fra flukt til arbeid og inkludering? En studie av flyktningers vei til arbeid og sosial inkludering i Norge," NIBR, 2017). The Norwegian Institute for Integration and Diversity (IMDI) showed that one of the major factors affecting refugees' ability to obtain job in Norway was their level of language competency. According to the study, refugees with strong language abilities were more likely to be employed, earn more money, and be happier

in their jobs. (Flyktninger in the Workplace: A Knowledge Overview, IMDI, 2019). Also, a University of Oslo study discovered that English-speaking refugees had a better time assimilating into Norwegian society and locating jobs than those who did not speak English (Caponi, 2020). Rye (2017) argues that expanding networks in Norway through English is another benefit for refugees. In another research conducted by the Norwegian Social Research Institute, English-speaking refugees said they had greater social networks and could get around Norwegian society more readily without difficulties (Rye, 2017). Speaking the host-country language is arguably the single most important skill that refugees need to build for successful integration into the host society and labour market (see e.g. OECD 2017c).

Chiswick and Miller (2014: 87) contend that investing in immigrants' fluency in the language of their intended country is advantageous for both immigrants and society as a whole since such immigrants will have an easier time integrating into that country's labour market.

The right to good education is fundamental for everyone, including citizens, immigrants, asylum seekers and refugee-like populations. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1951 Refugee Convention, the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Bill of Human Rights. 1951 Refugee Convention refers to the right of education in its Article 22: "The Contracting States shall accord to refugees the same treatment as is accorded to nationals with respect to elementary education. The Contracting States shall accord to refugees' treatment as favourable as possible, and, in any event, not less favourable than that accorded to aliens generally in the same circumstances, with respect to education other than elementary education and, in particular, as regards access to studies, the recognition of foreign school certificates, diplomas and degrees, the remission of fees and charges and the award of scholarships".

I asked the participants if their fluency or level of English language speaking ability, according to their knowledge, had increased their chances of obtaining paid employment according to their aspirations in Norway. Aarifa said she didn't have command on the Norwegian language when starting to apply for jobs because of her background as an anglophone speaker but English really helped her to developed her capacity and extend her network in Norwegian society. According to her...

"I didn't speak Norwegian so much then, but I could use my English, that was really good and that was where I really started to kind of develop myself and also to extend my network"

When I asked another participant... "If her ability to speak English language or played a role in seeking employment? Aarifa said...

“It could be because lucky enough most Norwegians speak English, so it helped me while learning the language, I could use English to find my way out so it helped me. It also helped me to pave the way, but still that shouldn't be the overall [...] the personal effort, that's one thing but the English language opened the door for me to get engaged in different ways.”

It has been reported that refugees with fluency in both Norwegian and English are more likely to obtain jobs in Norway (Dahl et al., 2018) . It has further been documented that refugees who speak these languages more fluently had a better likelihood of landing jobs that matched their education and experience (Fangen & Paasche, 2013; Grønseth, 2001). Another participant who came from the Middle East, Ibrahim said that...

“English really helped me because in the first two years at the refugee centers, I couldn't speak Norwegian but English helped me to be in contact with the community around. Refugees were not allowed to work so English helped me to translate some books from English to Arabic. So, I got some money for freelancing at that time since the stipend wasn't enough to cater for my needs. English helped me to learn Norwegian language and also helped in facilitating my communication with a Norwegian woman I met at the training centre who is now my wife”.

In a separate study, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) discovered that English-speaking refugees had a better chance of finding job in Norway. The study also discovered that learning a new language assisted immigrants in creating social networks and locating community support. A report prepared for the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, Integration of Refugees in Norway (International Organization for Migration, 2017). To get a clearer picture of the phenomena, the Norwegian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs also conducted a poll titled “Refugee Crisis in Norway: Employer Information” of Norwegian companies and discovered that language abilities, notably English proficiency, were a crucial consideration for recruiting refugees. According to the poll, companies preferred to work with refugees who were fluent in both Norwegian and English (Norwegian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2016).

Base on the outcome of previous studies and experiences by the participants themselves, it is clear that a refugee's ability to communicate in English has a big impact on their ability to build a network in Norway and obtain job. For refugees to successfully integrate into society and find work, language ability is essential.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEMES AND PATTERNS EMERGING FROM FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter will present and discuss the key findings in light of the theoretical perspectives advanced in the theory chapter. A few recommendations for the policy and practice field will be outlined. As indicated in the introduction of this study, this thesis explores skilled English-speaking refugees' experiences in obtaining paid employment in the Norwegian labour market in order to deepen our understanding of what influences the labour market integration in Norway among this particular group. Eight participants were interviewed using interview guides that were meticulously crafted to align with the four central research questions identified through a comprehensive literature review. These questions were further refined through in-depth discussions with my supervisor, ensuring their relevance and coherence. Additionally, the interview guides were thoughtfully designed to incorporate pertinent topics, reflecting both the existing scholarly knowledge and logical reasoning.

All the 8 participants interviews were done and transcribed in the English language and analysed using coding. Coding involves the process of categorizing and organizing the data into meaningful themes or categories (Gibbs, 2007). It helps researchers identify patterns, similarities, and differences in the participants' responses (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). The use of bottom-up reasoning in the data collection and analysis was really helpful and useful in letting the participants tell their own stories in the ways they believed were appropriate and letting the data reflect the thematic tale of the thesis while also containing any potential biases on my part.

Applying Structuration Theory to the Findings of the Study

As indicated earlier in the introduction, the purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of highly skilled refugees in Norway as they navigated into the labour market. In this chapter, I will draw on insights from Structuration Theory by Anthony Giddens to discuss the findings of this study.

The Structuration Theory by Anthony Giddens highlights the function of structure and agency in social life. It suggests that social structures are continuously recreated through people's actions rather than being fixed entity. Giddens argues that agency and structure are intertwined and mutually supportive (Giddens 1976). To explore the complex relationship between

refugee agencies and the structural barriers they encounter in the labour market, we can use structural theory in the context of refugees' integration into the workforce.

According to Giddens' Structuration theory, social structures are generated and reproduced via the interactions and activities of individuals rather than acting as external forces that impose restrictions on people (Giddens 1976).

All the participants emphasized the value and importance of being able to work in a professional setting and have a fulfilling career. None of the eight participants achieved their childhood aspirations or dreams of jobs they had from their country of origin before arriving in Norway.

Seven out of the eight participants described their current work life as satisfactory despite missing out on their childhood aspirations. They, however, argued that their inability to fulfilling their dreams is the systematic and structural challenges that hinder their integration into the Norwegian labour market and society at large on several factors. As elaborated in previous chapters, the participants explained issues such as language barriers, lack of formal education or training, lack of social networks, limited access to job opportunities, and discrimination.

The various participants encountered different challenges and experiences within the labour market as part of their integration processes. Despite the challenges they are faced with, however, the majority of the participants have obtained full-time paid employment in different fields.

The findings that emerged the data align with several key concepts of Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory. The theory emphasizes the interplay between social structures and individual agency, highlighting how structures both enable and constrain individuals' actions and choices:

Structuration and Social Structures: The findings suggest various structural challenges that hinder refugees' integration into the Norwegian labour market, such as language barriers, lack of formal education or training, limited social networks, limited job opportunities, and discrimination. These structural factors shape and influence the opportunities available to refugees and impact their ability to fulfil their aspirations. According to Giddens, social structures are not external forces acting upon individuals, but they are produced and reproduced through individuals' actions and interactions.

Duality of Structure: The findings highlight that despite facing structural obstacles, the majority of the participants have obtained full-time paid employment in different fields. This reflects the duality of structure, as individuals' agency and actions can also influence and

reshape social structures. Although the participants' aspirations were not fully realized, their ability to find satisfactory work demonstrates how they navigate and negotiate within the existing structures to achieve some level of integration.

Reflexivity: The participants' reflections on the challenges they face in the labour market and society at large demonstrate reflexivity, a key aspect of Giddens' theory. The participants are aware of the structural constraints and describe the systematic issues that hinder their integration. This reflexivity enables them to critically analyze and understand the factors that influence their opportunities and outcomes.

Power and Discrimination: The findings point out discrimination as one of the difficulties refugees faces in integrating into the workforce. Giddens' theory recognizes power as an integral part of social structures, and discrimination can be seen as a manifestation of power relations within society. Power imbalances can contribute to the marginalization and exclusion of certain groups, limiting their access to employment prospects and influencing their employment rates and earnings.

Overall, the findings align with the central ideas of Structuration Theory by highlighting the complex interplay between social structures, individual agency, power dynamics, and the constraints and opportunities that refugees encounter in their pursuit of integration into the labour force in Norway

The integration of refugees into the labour force is a complicated issue with many difficulties in Norway. As indicated in previous research by Bratsberg et al. (2017), and as confirmed in this study, refugees in Norway encountered a lot of challenges when trying to find employment. Some of the major issues affecting them include language obstacles, lack of social network, lack of formal education or training, lack of access to employment prospects, and discrimination are just a few of the difficulties that refugees in Norway confront as they attempt to integrate into the workforce.

The discussion will be organized into the following sub-themes; integration, employment status, micro-obstacles, macro-obstacles, current work life, and aspirations for the future.

Integration

The goals of Norway's government Introduction Program for Refugees include encouraging social and economic integration and lowering social and financial disparities between refugees and native Norwegians. This is consistent with the government of Norway's overarching policy objective of fostering a more inclusive, balanced, and fair society and their integration into the labour market and the society at large (Djuve et al., 2018).

The participants of the study expressed various challenges they faced in integrating into the Norwegian labour market. Despite their high qualifications and English proficiency, they reported difficulties in adapting to cultural norms and language barriers. This was compounded by the lack of social networks and support systems, which limited their opportunities to build relationships and access relevant information. Despite these challenges, the participants exhibited resilience and resourcefulness in seeking out opportunities to integrate, including attending language classes and participating in social events as stated by (Berry et al., 1997) in their Cultural Integration Model of the theoretical perspective in Chapter 2. For example, participants such as (Aziza, and Aarifa) bemoaned that their integration upon arrival was a nightmare.

Employment Status

The participants of the study faced significant challenges in obtaining employment that was commensurate with their qualifications and experience. Many participants reported being overqualified for the jobs they were offered, while others struggled to find employment due to a lack of relevant social networks and work experience in Norway. The participants also expressed frustration at the lack of recognition of their qualifications and experience, which they felt was due to a lack of understanding of their home country's educational systems and professional standards.

However, despite the difficulties they experience, as described in Chapter 4, the individuals who arrived in Norway as refugees used several techniques to find jobs. Some of the key strategies they employed included the acquisition of the Norwegian language, Networking and Social Integration, voluntarism, vocational training and education to enter the labour market. To match refugees with volunteer opportunities in their home areas, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) has launched a program named "NRC Velferd" (NRC, n.d.). The Norwegian Red Cross has also started a project called "Refugee Guides," which teaches volunteers to assist refugees in their integration process in Norway (Norwegian Red Cross, n.d.), all these efforts are geared towards supporting refugees and newly arrived immigrants who want to live in Norway finds footnotes within the labour market. Language proficiency, especially in Norwegian, is regarded as being necessary for refugees to secure employment in Norway. Refugees can increase their chances of finding employment by learning the local language and developing their communication skills (Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, UDI). All eight participants enrolled and benefited from the free language training offered by various municipalities in Norway to enhance their employability. Also, to develop the skills and

credentials necessary for the Norwegian labour market, many refugees enrolled in vocational training or educational programs. These courses boost their chances of landing a job while giving them knowledge unique to their respective fields (Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration, NAV)]. Also, by participating in social events, joining local groups, and networking with neighbours and other refugees, participants can assist refugees in finding employment possibilities through word-of-mouth recommendations. Programs for integrating people make networking possibilities and social interactions easier [Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)]. The use of a network by the refugees was one of the major tools used by the participants to enter the labour market as indicated in the previous chapter. Some of the participants Aziza and Aarifa stressed the importance of the use of social and family networks to navigate their ways within the labour market. As highlighted by several scholars and works of literature such as Chase & Clarke, 2015; Sinclair et al., volunteering can improve refugees' mental health, economic & social integration, and sense of belonging in the host nation (Chase & Clarke, 2015; Sinclair et al., 2018). Similarly, the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA), backed the finding obtained in this study which concluded that volunteering can be very helpful for refugees' integration, including getting them access to jobs. The research emphasizes how crucial it is to inform refugees about volunteer opportunities and to offer them assistance and training so they can participate effectively (RCOA, 2019). Some participants who arrived in Norway with a degree qualification [Recognition of Foreign Educational Credentials] lamented about its acceptance in Norway. However, according to The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI), the qualifications and work experience that refugees acquired in their native countries are being recognized and evaluated. By doing so, they can compete for employment that matches their knowledge and helps verify their skills (UDI).

Depending on the participants' unique situations and the resources at their disposal, several tactics were used to overcome obstacles and improve refugees' integration into the Norwegian labour market, these measures were used.

Perceived Labour Market Obstacles

This study also found that the participants faced various barriers that hindered their progress towards employment. These included difficulties in navigating the job market, including job searching, resume preparation, and job interviews. Participants also expressed frustration at the lack of information available on job opportunities and the requirements for specific positions. Additionally, participants reported facing discrimination and bias from potential employers and colleagues, which further limited their employment opportunities.

Other participants also faced obstacles that affected their ability to enter the labour market. These included structural barriers, such as the lack of recognition of foreign qualifications and experience, as well as broader societal issues, such as discrimination and lack of diversity in the workplace. Some of the participants reported feeling isolated and marginalized within the labour market, which was compounded by the lack of support and resources available to address these obstacles.

Current Work Life Experiences

The current working lives of participants in this study, are crucial to their sense of integration and for their general well-being. Employment provides refugees with several advantages, such as financial independence, social integration, and a sense of inclusion in their new country as revealed by some research conducted by state institutions such as the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and various municipalities.

Refugees who find work can become more financially independent and less dependent on social welfare programs. They can sustain themselves and their families thanks to their economic self-sufficiency, which promotes a feeling of dignity and empowerment.

Work is essential for social integration as well. Refugees can develop their social networks, language abilities, and understanding of other cultures by interacting with co-workers, clients, and employers. Refugees who work have more chances to interact with their new surroundings, make friends, and form deep connections.

Additionally, finding jobs that fit their qualifications and skill set enables refugees to contribute to the Norwegian workforce and fully utilize their knowledge. It improves their sense of belonging and has a favourable effect on their self-esteem and mental health.

The study discovered that despite the challenges they encountered, the participants were currently employed in a variety of fields, including education, social, health care, and technology.

Aspirations for the Future

A key component of their integration and adjustment in Norway is the goals of the refugees living there for the future. The objectives of refugees in Norway and how these goals impact their assimilation into Norwegian society have been the subject of several studies identified in this study, research by Fjørtoft and Theodorsen (2018) centred on the goals of Syrian refugees living in Norway, revealed that Syrian refugees had goals for social integration, employment,

and education. The authors discovered that their memories of the Syrian civil war and their expectations for a better life in Norway had an impact on their goals. The survey also discovered that Syrian refugees encountered major obstacles to achieving their goals, such as language barriers, prejudice, and cultural differences as experienced by the participants in this study. In another study by Sundaram and Feitosa (2021) on Afghan refugees in Norway, the authors discovered that their prior experiences, particularly their schooling and social networks in Afghanistan, had an impact on these objectives. The study also revealed that prejudice and linguistic barriers were among the major obstacles Afghan refugees faced in achieving their goals.

Lastly, the study explored the participants' aspirations for the future. Many participants expressed a desire to continue to develop their careers in Norway and to contribute to Norwegian society. However, participants also emphasized the importance of addressing the macro-obstacles they faced in accessing employment opportunities. Participants expressed a desire for greater recognition of their qualifications and experience.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

Summary Reflection on the Research

The objective of the thesis was to explore highly-skilled refugees' experiences in obtaining paid employment in the labour market in Norway and also to deepen our understanding of what influences the labour market integration in Norway among these particular groups of immigrants.

The study also explored childhood aspirations and refugee experiences in obtaining jobs in Norway as part of their integration into the labour market and society at large. As indicated in the data analysis in chapter four, some participants of the study were confronted with challenges in their quest to obtain paid employment due to lack of social network, challenges getting their country-of-origin academic credentials accepted or recognised, non-availability of jobs or positions relating to their qualifications, language barriers and discrimination.

The key to the successful labour integration of refugees, according to this study's findings and those of other related research, is learning Norwegian as a native language upon arrival.

Also, this study has shown as indicated in chapter four, speaking the English language is an advantage when settling in Norway as English is increasingly becoming the "lingua franca" in many workplace contexts in Norway. It also revealed that refugees or immigrants with strong ties i.e., friends and family relations play a critical role in the successful integration of refugees in the labour market. The study also highlighted that participants' fluency in English gives them an edge to learn the native language [Norwegian] and also facilitates their easy employment.

Per the study, despite some participants having two separate master's and bachelor's degrees from their country of origin with work experiences, they still struggled to find jobs to do upon their arrival in Norway.

Recommendations for Future Research

As indicated above, research into refugees' integration phenomena is broader, it was difficult for me to address such a huge and topical subject like this one which is of concern to many governments within Europe and the world at large given the short time frame for this study, which emphasizes the integration of immigrants into the Norwegian labour market. Nevertheless, there are several areas in the data collected as shown that seem to open doors for further and future research, either to deepen understanding or touch on other aspects not examined in this study given the time-constrained, taking into account the limitations of this

study and the fact that integration is a very broad topic. The study of immigrant integration in Norway has recently undergone substantial advancement. However, there is also a dearth of studies on the integration of refugees following the Introduction Program, when they encounter several difficulties, particularly when attempting to enter the labour market.

Although I used the entirety of Norway for my case study, it could be interesting to conduct another or the same research using a municipality as the base or point of focus to understand the problem at that level of society. It would also be quite interesting to compare the employment rates of English speakers and non-English speakers who have fled to Norway. Future studies on refugee integration should also consider these areas: the impact of trauma, the impact of human capital issues, the impact of employer attitudes or racist attitudes that systematically reduces the opportunities for obtaining a good job for certain groups of the population.

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The Interview Guide

Introduction: This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to explore highly-skilled refugees’ experiences in obtaining paid employment in the labour market in Norway. In particular, I will focus on refugees who have a vocational training (fagbrev) or an academic degree (bachelor degree or more) from either in Norway and or in their country of origin.

The aim of the project is to explore to explore highly-skilled refugees’ experiences in obtaining paid employment in the labour market in Norway and also to deepen our understanding of what influences the labour market integration in Norway among this particular group of people.

Purpose of the project: The project is part of the fulfilment of Master thesis in Intercultural Studies at NLA University College in Bergen. The study may also potentially lead to a Scientific article.....

Interview guide for Highly-skilled refugees or immigrants with refugee background in Norway.

Demographic/personal information

- a) Age group.....20-30[], 30-50 [], 50 and above []
- b) Sex.....Male [], Female [], Other []
- c) When did you arrived Norway?.....
- d) Marital status:. Married [], Living together with a partner [] or Divorced [], Single[]
- e) Number of children: 1-2 [], 2-5 [], 5-10 [], Nil []
- f) Your country of origin.....
- g) Level of Education: University/College [], Vocational [], Professor/PhD/Dr [], Nil[]
- h) Employment status: Employed [], Employment type: public [], private [], self [], Unemployed []

Questions for Participants

To complement the research question, I have included these questions to provide a broader picture of the research question.

In order to shed light on these questions, I will explore:

- a) Your background, and how it was for you to settle in Norway as a refugee
- b) Efforts made to enter the Norwegian labour market;
- c) Experiences of unemployment (for how long, what did it make you feel), and
- d) Experiences with obtaining the first paid job until the job you hold today, e.g. steps taken, barriers you overcame, and how your different jobs made you feel.

NSD Assessment



Request for taking part in this research project

Title of research project: Getting the right job: A qualitative analysis of skilled English-speaking refugees' trajectories into the labour market in Norway

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to explore English-speaking refugees and efforts made in order to obtain “the right” paid job in Norway. In particular, I will focus on refugees who have a vocational training (fagbrev) or an

academic degree (bachelor degree or more) from either in Norway and/or in their country of origin. In this letter we will provide information about this research project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project:

The aim of the project is to explore English-speaking refugees and efforts made in order to obtain “the right” paid job in the labour market.

The project is part of the fulfilment of Master thesis in Intercultural Studies at NLA University College in Bergen. The study may also potentially lead to a scientific article.

The research questions that will be explored in the study are;

- a) How can we understand different pathways into paid employment among skilled English-speaking refugees in Norway?
- b) And how can we understand interconnections between labour market inclusion and sense of identity, in particular when focusing on the sociocultural significance of being (remaining) unemployed, vs. only being employed in the “wrong job” vs being employed in the “right job”?

Who is responsible for the research project?

NLA University Colleges is the institution responsible for the project.

Why are you being asked to participate?

Participants for this project will be refugees or immigrants with refugee background in Norway. Personal contacts and snowball approach sampling will be used to identify participants. A total of 8-10 participants will be interviewed (typically 20-50 years of age).

What does participation involve for you?

- If you chose to take part in the project, you will be invited for a personal interview that will last approximately 50-90 minutes. Your answers will be safely recorded.

Transcripts will be saved electronically on a research server as specified below.

Personal notes will be taken by the researcher during the interviews.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project by the respondents is voluntary.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data

We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

- The researcher and project supervisor are the only ones to have access to personal data.
- I will replace your name and contact details with a code. The list of names, contact

details and respective codes will be stored separately from the rest of the collected data, I will store the data on a research server, locked away and encrypted.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

The project is scheduled to end 01 June 2024. Personal data will then be deleted.

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and

send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data.

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with NLA University College, Data Protection Services has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- NLA University college via Hilde Danielsen, by email: Hilde.Danielsen@nla.no or by telephone: +47 55 5407 76.
- Our Data Protection Officer: Inger-Johane Gamlem Njau, by email: Inger-Johanne.Njau@nla.no or by telephone: +4755540749
- Data Protection Services, by email: (personvern tjenester@sikt.no) or by telephone: +47 53 21 15 00.

Yours sincerely,

Hilde Danielsen

Project Leader

Project Leader Student (Abednego Akwasi Asante Asiedu)

(Researcher/supervisor Mai Camilla Munkejord)

Consent form

Consent can be given in writing (including electronically) or orally. NB! You must be able to

document/demonstrate that you have given information and gained consent from project participants

i.e. from the people whose personal data you will be processing (data subjects). As a rule, we recommend written information and written consent.

- For written consent on paper you can use this template
- For written consent which is collected electronically, you must choose a procedure that will allow you to demonstrate that you have gained explicit consent (read more on our website)
- If the context dictates that you should give oral information and gain oral consent (e.g. for research in oral cultures or with people who are illiterate) we recommend that you make a sound recording of the information and consent.

If a parent/guardian will give consent on behalf of their child or someone without the capacity to consent, you must adjust this information accordingly. Remember that the name of the participant must be included.

Adjust the checkboxes in accordance with participation in your project. It is possible to use bullet points instead of checkboxes. However, if you intend to process special categories of personal data (Sensitive personal data) and/or one of the last four points in the list below is applicable to your project, we recommend that you use checkboxes. This because of the requirement of explicit consent.

I have received and understood information about the project [insert project title] and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- ” to participate in (insert method, e.g. an interview)
- ” to participate in (insert other methods, e.g. an online survey) – if applicable
- ” for my/my child’s teacher to give information about me/my child to this project (include the type of information)– if applicable
- ” for my personal data to be processed outside the EU – if applicable
- ” for information about me/myself to be published in a way that I can be recognised (describe in more detail)– if applicable
- ” for my personal data to be stored after the end of the project for (insert purpose of storage e.g. follow-up studies) – if applicable

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx.

[insert date]

(Signed by participant, date)