

Making Integration Work: Refugees' Experience After the Introduction Program in Kristiansand, Norway

Limits to access to jobs after the Introduction Program that hinder the integration of immigrant refugees

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Abstract

Persisting wars and other atrocities around the world, and especially in non-Western countries, force people to flee their respective countries for their lives and those of their children. Once they arrive in the host countries, mostly Western countries, integrating in a fulfilling way into their new society poses enormous challenges for them. In Norway, the integration of refugees into society and especially into the labor market does not seem to be a success for many despite enormous efforts that the municipalities make through the Introduction Program to facilitate their integration. This research was conducted in the municipality of Kristiansand in Norway. One of the Norwegian municipalities hosting a large number of refugees. The research attempted to explore the difficulties and challenges immigrant refugees face in their daily lives after the Introduction Program. The study focused on the limitations of access to employment after the Introduction Program that hinder the integration of immigrant refugees. Eighteen informants in total were selected using a mixed, purposive and snowball sampling method. Non-Western Refugees in the Post-Introduction Program phase and public officials from NAV and the Introduction Program were interviewed in a semi-structured style, using a qualitative method. The results of this research showed that several challenges related to human capital and social integration hinder refugees from accessing the labour market after the Introduction Program. Challenges such as language proficiency, recognition of their previous studies, approval of their school documents acquired in their country of origin and/or transit, and studies in Norway, constituted in terms of human capital a major challenge to their integration into the labour market. Despite efforts to overcome these challenges and acquire Norwegian human capital, most refugees still do not have access to relevant jobs due to other challenges related to social integration. The difficulty of establishing the social network due to socio-cultural factors, to the mainstream discourse on refugees, pushes natives and especially employers to scepticism, discrimination and social exclusion and thus prevents their integration into the labour market, and in society in general. Strengthening public social integration strategies would facilitate refugees' access to the relevant labour market in the municipality and integrate actively into society.

Sammendrag

Vedvarende kriger og andre grusomheter rundt om i verden, og spesielt i ikke-vestlige land, tvinger folk til å flykte fra sine respektive land for livet og barna sine. Når de først ankommer vertslandene, for det meste vestlige land, utgjør det enorme utfordringer for dem å integrere seg på en tilfredsstillende måte i det nye samfunnet. I Norge ser ikke integreringen av flyktninger i samfunnet og spesielt i arbeidsmarkedet ut til å være noen suksess for mange til tross for en enorm innsats som kommunene legger ned gjennom Introduksjonsprogrammet for å tilrettelegge for deres integrering. Denne forskningen ble utført i Kristiansand kommune i Norge. En av de norske kommunene som tar imot et stort antall flyktninger. Forskningen forsøkte å utforske vanskene og utfordringene innvandrersflyktninger møter i hverdagen etter introduksjonsprogrammet. Studien setter søkelys på begrensningene i tilgang til arbeid etter introduksjonsprogrammet som hindrer integrering av innvandrersflyktninger. Totalt atten informanter ble valgt ut ved hjelp av en blandet, målrettet og snøballprøvemetode. Ikke-vestlige flyktninger i postintroduksjonsfasen, offentlige tjenestemenn fra NAV og introduksjonsprogrammet ble intervjuet i semistrukturert stil, ved bruk av kvalitativ metode. Resultatene av denne forskningen viste at flere utfordringer knyttet til menneskelig kapital og sosial integrering hindrer flyktninger i å komme inn på arbeidsmarkedet etter introduksjonsprogrammet. Utfordringer som språkkunnskaper, anerkjennelse av tidligere studier, godkjenning av skoledokumenter ervervet i hjemlandet og/eller transittlandet, og studier i Norge, utgjorde humankapitalen en stor utfordring for deres integrering på arbeidsmarkedet. Til tross for innsats for å overvinne disse utfordringene og skaffe norsk menneskelig kapital, har de fleste flyktninger fortsatt ikke tilgang til relevante jobber på grunn av andre utfordringer knyttet til sosial integrering. Vanskeligheten med å etablere det sosiale nettverket på grunn av sosiokulturelle faktorer, den ordinære diskursen om flyktninger, presser innfødte og spesielt arbeidsgivere til skepsis, diskriminering og sosial ekskludering og hindrer dermed deres integrering på arbeidsmarkedet, og i samfunnet generelt. Styrking av offentlige sosiale integreringsstrategier vil lette flyktningers tilgang til det relevante arbeidsmarkedet i kommunen og integrere seg aktivt i samfunnet.

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I also take this opportunity to deeply thank my family for all the support they gave me during the demanding period of my studies. Thanks to my friends and my fellow classmates in this program with whom I keep only good academic memories.

Finally, I thank my father who always pushed me to do the master's program one day. I am glad I honored his wish. May he rest in peace.

Declaration

I, Robby London Ntonde, hereby declare that this master's thesis, titled «Making the integration work: Refugees' experience after the Introduction Program in Kristiansand, Norway. Limits to access to jobs after the Introduction Program that hinder the integration of immigrant refugees», is my original work. I also state that I have not submitted it to any other university or educational institution other than the University of Agder, Norway.

Place:

Kristiansand, Norway

Signature:

Robby London Ntonde

Date:

May 2022

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

CV	Curriculum Vitae
DR Congo	Democratic Republic of Congo
Etikkom	The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
EU	European Union
EØS Economic Area)	Det Europeiske Økonomiske Samerbeidsområdet (European
IMDi Directorate of Integration and Diversity)	Integrerings og Mangfoldsdirektoratet (The Norwegian
Intropro	Introduction Program
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
NAV Administration)	Ny Arbeids og Velferdsforvalning (New Labour and Welfare
NOKUT Agency for Quality Assurance in Education)	Nasjonalt Organ for Kvalitet i Utdanningen (The Norwegian
NSD Research Data)	Norsk Senter for Forskningsdata (Norwegian Center for
SFO	Skolefritidsordningen
SSB	Statistisk sentralbyrå
UDI	The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration
UiA	Universitet i Agder (University of Agder)
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Migratory flow is believed to be one of the oldest human phenomena in the world. It is often associated with various circumstances including situations of war, conflict, persecution, and other human rights violations. According to the United Nations Agency for Refugees (UNHCR), in 2018 more than 70 million people worldwide are made up of refugees who fled for their lives (UNHCR, 2019). The UNHCR points out that this has been a top record for almost 70 years of its existence (Ibid.). Europe has long been one of the host continents for several refugees from different war zones and conflict-affected areas around the world, such as Asia Minor, sub-Saharan Africa, the countries of the Sahel region in Africa and other countries at war and in conflict. In doing this, although many die fleeing these wars, crossing the seas to reach the European continent, Europe appears to save the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in need of protection.

As reported by UNHCR (2015), in 2015 Europe witnessed a massive migratory inflow of refugees arriving on the continent. The UNHCR speaks of a record figure of 1,000,573 people who reached Europe via the Mediterranean Sea to Greece and Italy, and 34,000 who took the direction from Turkey to Bulgaria and Greece (Haaland & Wallevik, 2019). This was considered as a migratory crisis, which marked the history of the world in general and especially that of Europe and which required a strong solidarity as a response to this issue. As UNHCR has stated, European countries are facing the biggest refugee and displacement crisis of the time. Above all, this is not just a crisis of numbers; it is also a crisis of solidarity (2015, p.5).

For several decades, Norway has welcomed refugees from different conflict-ridden regions or with occurrences of violence of human rights, worldwide. As pointed out by the Norwegian ministries (2018), from 1997 to 2002 there was a considerable increase in the number of asylum seekers in Norway. The peak was in 2002 with 17,500 arrivals from many countries (Ibid.). The migration boom of 2015 made Norway a host country for more than 31,000 asylum seekers (Norwegian Ministries, 2016, p.9). Certainly, several studies indicate that there has been an uneven distribution of refugees among European countries. However, for Norway, this number remains a record in a year never registered before (Norwegian Ministries, 2016). In addition, more than 2,500 refugees have been resettled (ibid.). In 2017, Norway recorded a total net immigration of 23,150 foreigners, a lower number than in 2016, which was 4,650 more

(Norwegian Ministries, 2018, p.6). According to Norwegian ministries, Syrian, Eritrean, and Afghan citizens were the most registered in terms of net immigrants (ibid.). As any immigrant, in Norway, the refugee immigration case is handled by the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI), in accordance with the country's immigration law and regulations (Norwegian Ministries, 2018). Norway, as one of the signatories of the 1951 United Nations Convention on Refugees and their Protection, and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), grants a residence permit to resettle refugees (Ibid.). In accordance with the United Nations program, Norway resettles refugees brought from camps in transit countries; and asylum seekers who come directly to Norway on their own, fleeing atrocities in their country (Bratsberg, Raaum and Røed, 2016). However, unlike the refugees that Norway brings alone, for asylum seekers, during the examination of their case, they are placed in reception centers (Norwegian Ministries, 2018). In case of obtaining a residence permit as a refugee or with a humanitarian status, the person is first assigned to his host municipality (Ibid.), before joining the integration process through the Introduction Program.

For the Integrerings- og mangfoldsdirektoratet or IMDi (Directorate of Integration and Diversity), the Introduction Program is offered to refugees aged 18 to 55 and their families who have obtained a residence permit in Norway, thus they have the right and the obligation to follow and complete this program (IMDi, 2019). The Introduction Program is a program designed for people who need to obtain basic qualifications, it is sanctioned by a certificate of participation at the end or in case of interruption (Ibid.).

The Introduction Program is normally followed for two years, an additional year may be granted for authorized leave, when specific reasons justify it, and the maximum may therefore be three years (IMDi, 2019). This program is entirely under the responsibility of the government through the municipalities, which offer to immigrant refugees opportunities such as strengthening their capacity to participate in professional, and social life, as to improve their financial independence (Lovdata, 2018, §1). The *Introdukjonsloven* or the Introductory Law stipulate that the Introduction Program provides refugees with skills such as rapid learning of the Norwegian language, culture, and social life (Ibid.).

The idea of extending the time for refugees in the Introduction Program has been the subject of debates and discussions for several years among academics and even the Norwegian government. In 2020, finally, a new law on the extension of the deadlines within the said program was passed (IMDi, 2021). This new law on integration through education, training, and work, called “new integration law” or “integreringsloven 2020”, adopted by the Norwegian

parliament in 2020, was considered the most important change of Norwegian integration policy for 20 years (Ibid.). After this long experience of integrating refugees, it has been observed by Norway that most immigrant refugees lack the formal skills necessary to enter the labor market and find employment (IMDi, 2021). Thus, as described in the texts, with this new law, the duration of the Introduction Program can now range from three months to three years, but an extension may be granted depending on the reason given, in particular the level of studies, the age and the final objectives (Ibid.). This new law therefore gives more time to those who need it and less time to those who do not need it more to learn the language and access opportunities such as continuing education or integrating the labour market.

1.2 Research Problem

As I have pointed out above, the migratory flow is one of the oldest phenomena in the world. It continues and will continue to take place as long as disturbing factors including wars, conflicts, persecution, and other forms of violation of human rights occur, as well as natural and human-made disasters, and even unemployment and abject poverty persist worldwide, causing people to flee or change places or countries. While this program appears to be important for both Norway and immigrant refugees, it is less known about opportunities and constraints that refugees are faced with while integrating the Norwegian society. It is therefore curious to do research to find out in the context of this work, how refugees flourish and thrive in host countries and why others fail.

The Introduction Program makes a suitable case for such a study as it seeks a better integration of refugees in the Norwegian society through introducing them to the Norwegian language, culture, and social life. This is followed by the Post-Introduction Program phase, which occurs when government responsibility through the municipalities under the Introduction Program ends, and refugees integrate fully into Norwegian society. They have rights and obligations (duties) like any Norwegian.

In this work, I will focus on the Post-Introduction Program phase, where I will explore the difficulties and challenges that immigrant refugees face in their everyday life after the Introduction Program while integrating the labor market. I want to understand the limits to access jobs after the introduction program that hinder the integration of immigrant refugees.

This research considers only the case of non-Western immigrant refugees in Norway who have completed the Introduction Program, and who are therefore in the Post-Introduction Program

phase where they face different realities that negatively or positively affect their everyday life. The work focuses on the case study of Kristiansand municipality, which is mainly the largest center of activity with higher demographics, and which probably hosts the largest number of immigrant refugees in the county of Agder in Norway. I selected a sample of 18 informants for my primary data collection. These informants are subdivided into two groups. The first group, which is the main target of this research, is made up of 14 informants. These are immigrant refugees in the Post-Introduction Program phase. The second is that of decision-makers or public officials, I selected 4 informants to cover this group. The points of view of decision makers will be useful to this research for certain clarifications in terms of policies and strategies applied not only in the Introduction Program but also and mostly after this program, and their impacts on the sustainable integration of immigrant refugees.

1.3 Research Objectives

Integration being a complex process, the main purpose of this work is to understand the complexity of the integration of immigrant refugees in the Post-Introduction Program phase in Norway. The logic of this research starts from the Introduction Program to the Post-Introduction Program phase where my attention is focused. The Introduction Program forms the basis for the integration of immigrant refugees in Norway. Thus, four key objectives are pursued in this work:

- The first is to examine if the Introduction Program is effective according to immigrant refugees and municipality officials, and if it really constitutes a solid basis for the sustainable integration of immigrant refugees in Norway.
- The second is to find out what strategies and policies exist at the municipality to support the integration of refugees during and after the Introduction Program.
- The third is to find out whether the social and financial support to immigrant refugees contributes to the inability to cope with life after the Introduction Program.
- The fourth is to determine whether immigrant refugees actively participate in the process of their integration.

The Post-Introduction Program phase is a period during which immigrant refugees have to face the realities of daily life like any Norwegian or other immigrants. Each according to his/her abilities (aptitudes) traces his/her own path for better integration. This is the most complex phase of integration due to the race for opportunities such as education, training (practice), job (employment), and so forth, and where access to these opportunities appears to be unequal

between ethnic Norwegians, immigrants from the EU and EØS, and non-Western refugees who seem to be more vulnerable, especially in terms of access to the labour market (Valenta & Bunar, 2010; Hardoy & Schøne, 2014; Bratsberg, Raaum & Røed 2016; Djuve & Kavli, 2018; Friberg & Midtbøen, 2018). Beyond inequalities in access to the labour market, according to Norwegian statistics, immigrants' incomes are also low compared to ethnic Norwegians (Kristiansand Municipality, 2015). The objective here is to seek to identify the reasons for these inequalities which slow down the integration process of immigrant refugees, and the strategies and policies put in place by the municipality to try to give a boost to immigrant refugees. Integration being a win-win process between immigrant refugees who improve their daily life thanks to the opportunities offered to them by the state through the municipality, and the taxes they contribute after seizing these opportunities for a socio-economic development of the country in general and that of the municipality more particularly (Ministry of Education and Research, 2018). The Ministry of Education and Research (2018, p.5), supports this claim by defining the term integration as a two-way process, requiring authorities to provide good opportunities and individual immigrants to make their own contribution.

1.4 Research Questions

All research activities aim to answer research questions (Blaikie, 2000). Following the above research objectives, the research will be guided by the following three research questions:

1. How does the welfare state system effectively contribute to the long-term integration of immigrant refugees?
2. How does the factor human capital impact the integration of immigration refugees in the labour market?
3. To what extent does social integration through social capital facilitates the access of immigrant refugees to the labour market?

1.5 Geographical Study Area and Context

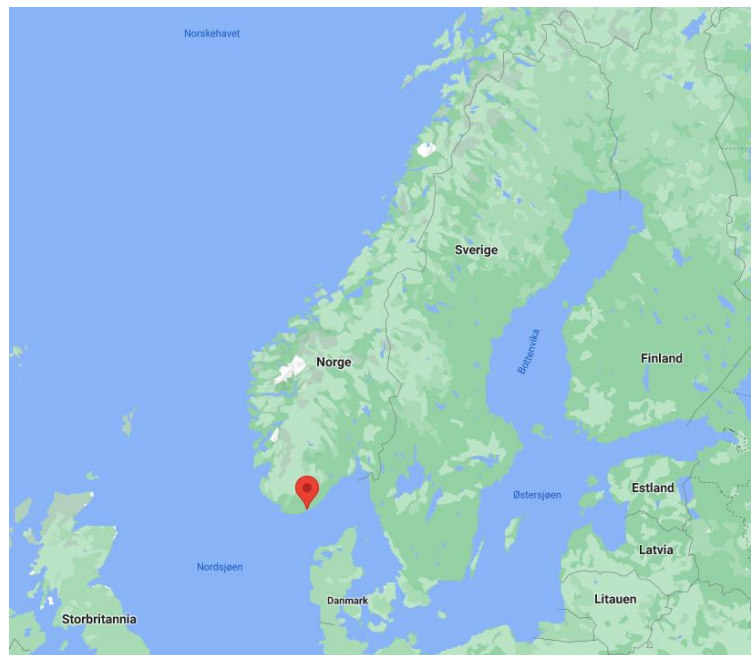
This research was carried out in Kristiansand municipality in the southern Norway. Norway is one of the Nordic countries. Located in the north of Europe, Norway is bounded on the North, West and South by the Barents Sea, the North-Atlantic Ocean or Norwegian Sea (Norskevahet) and the North Sea (Nordsjøen). It is bordered on the East by Sweden, Finland, and Russia (Sverige, Finland and Russland). Norway is known as a destination country for immigrants. Its splendid nature, its economic stability, as well as its welfare state system make it not only an attractive country but also a welcoming one. Immigration is an important factor

in population growth in Norway (SSB, 2018). Since 1950, due to immigration, the Norwegian population has increased by approximately 2 million, the country currently has 5.3 million (SSB, 2019).

In 2014, Norway launched a local government reform, reducing municipalities from 428 to 356 and from 19 counties to 11 as of 01.01.2020 (Regjeringen, 2020). The main objective of this reform was to reduce the number of municipalities in order to have good and equal services for inhabitants, today and in the future; to establish comprehensive and coordinated community development, in both larger and smaller municipalities; to have sustainable and financially solid municipalities; but also, to strengthen local democracy, and to give more power to municipalities (Ibid.). This reform merged the counties of East and West Agder into a single county of Agder, and the municipalities of Kristiansand, Søgne and Sogndalen into a single municipality of Kristiansand (Ibid). According to Statistics Norway, as of January 1, 2020, the Municipality of Kristiansand has 111,654 inhabitants (Kristiansand Municipality, 2020). Kristiansand Municipality is the 5th largest city, and the administrative centre of Agder County. It borders the North, East, and West by the municipalities of Vennesla and Birkenes, Lillesand, and Lindesnes.

Compared to the national average, according to Kristiansen (2017), Kristiansand is the city that settles the most immigrants. Kristiansand is known as a multicultural city, it has over 161 citizens from different countries (Ibid.). Norwegian statistics indicated in 2014 that around 16% of citizens in Kristiansand were immigrants or Norwegian-born to immigrant parents (Kristiansand Municipality, 2015). The diversity among the citizens of Kristiansand makes it a developing city, hence it is required by the Municipality of Kristiansand that all citizens seize the opportunities to contribute to the further development of the city (Ibid.). This stimulated me much more to carry out this research. On the one hand there is an effort made by the municipality through various opportunities put in place to facilitate the integration of immigrant refugees, and on the other hand the involvement and the will of the latter not only to succeed by accessing jobs and ensuring their autonomy, but also to contribute to the general well-being in the municipality of Kristiansand. This should be accompanied by new policies and strategies beyond what exists and on a perpetual basis and even by monitoring and evaluation to reduce the different types of difficulties that hinders their integration in the labour market after the Introduction Program. The objective being the full integration and participation for the sustainable development, as emphasized by the Municipality of Kristiansand.

Figure 1: Kristiansand Municipality



Source: Google map (2021).

1.6 Personal Motivation for the Research

The municipality, through the Introduction Program, makes a major effort in terms of integrating newly settled immigrant refugees. These immigrant refugees convert into students as part of the Introduction Program to learn the Norwegian language, civic education, and other studies, receive social and financial support to ensure their well-being during this program. However, although they tend to be in control of their daily life during the Introduction Program with all the benefits received, most immigrant refugees have no idea what to expect after this program. The realities of the post-insertion phase of the program remain unpredictable in terms of integration, particularly in the labour market.

In the Post-Introduction Program phase, most of these immigrant refugees pursue studies in different fields according to their abilities, others find jobs or places of professional training. And others who have not succeeded in studying, finding a job or a training place are either placed under the supervision of the municipality but no longer as part of an Introduction Program, or stay at home without doing anything. Paradoxically, although not at the same level, those who seem to succeed by studying, working, or having a training place also encounter

difficulties and challenges in terms of integration. Although immigrant refugees integrate over time, those who have completed the Introduction Program for more than 10 years still face some integration challenges, such as accessing the labour market or getting relevant jobs and even establishing potential network (Brekke & Mastekaasa, 2008; Agyare, 2021). This motivated me much more to carry out this research to seek to study and understand the reasons for these challenges and difficulties that characterize the daily life of immigrant refugees after the Introduction Program, to find lasting solutions and efficient remarks to overcome the issues which slowdown their integration process in Norway and especially in Kristiansand.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

The terms being understood and defined differently from one person to another depending on their point of view, in the context of this research to avoid any terminological misunderstanding, it is important for me to define the key terms that I have used in this work.

Integration: IOM (2021) defines the term integration as a two-way process of mutual adaptation between migrants and the societies in which they live. It entails a set of joint responsibilities for migrants and communities, it also incorporates other related notions such as social inclusion and social cohesion (Ibid.). Although the term integration is known as multidimensional with several meanings, the definitions used in this study (chapter two) are consistent with that of the IOM.

Immigrant: The definition of immigrant from the perspective of the country of arrival, is a person who moves into a country other than that of his/her nationality or usual residence, so that the country of destination effectively becomes his/her new country of usual residence (IOM, 2021).

Refugee: The meaning of the term refugee draws its references from the UN convention of 1951, to its Article 1A (2), it is defined as any person who "...owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of particular social group or political opinion is outside the country of his/her nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear is unwilling to avail himself/herself or the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his/her former habitual residence...is able, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it" (UNHCR, 2006).

Asylum Seeker: This term refers to an individual who requests or intends (needs) to seek international protection in a country other than his/her own due to atrocities and other harm endured in his/her country of origin (UNHCR, 2006). A nuance here is that according to the UNHCR (2006), all refugees are initially asylum seekers, but not all asylum seekers are ultimately recognized as refugees. After examining his/her request, in case of a negative answer, they send him/her back to his/her country of origin (Ibid.).

- **Western refugees:** They are refugees from the European region.
- **Non-western refugee:** They are refugees who come from outside the European region.

Introduction Program: According to IDMi (2019), the Introduction Program is a time-limited program (from 6 months to 2 and / or 3 years for all, and with the new law 4 years for those who want to finish their secondary school), implemented for adult refugee immigrants and their families who have obtained a residence permit in Norway, they are settled in the municipalities in order to obtain basic qualifications while benefiting from economic support.

Post-introduction Program Phase: It is the period after the Introduction Program, where immigrants are supposed to function like any Norwegian or other immigrant in Norway (study, find a job or other).

1.8 Research Structure

This study is structured in 6 chapters. The chapters are: (1) introduction, (2) literature review and theoretical framework, (3) methodology, (4) empirical findings, (5) analysis. I end this work with conclusion and recommendations (6).

In the first chapter, I describe the reason for this research, the way it is organized, and how it is conducted in detail in the following chapters. In this chapter, I present the work considering the following points; introduction, research problem, research objectives and questions, geographical study area and context, my personal motivation for this research, definitions of key terms, methodology in brief, and finally the structure of research. In the second chapter, I start with a brief introduction, then I move to the point concerning the literature review where I delved into the existing literature to identify and update myself on the evolution of discussions

on this theme and its relevance to this study. I also explain in detail in the theoretical framework the theories retained and how they are interconnected. Among these theories there are; the theory of the welfare state, that of human capital and social integration. Chapter three focuses on the methodology of the work. It concerns the description, justification and application of the methods chosen for this research. After giving the positionality of the research, I took into consideration the research method, design, strategies, epistemological and ontological considerations, data material and sampling method, data collection by interviews, data analysis, research ethics, and research challenges. In the fourth chapter, I present my findings on the challenges and difficulties immigrant refugees face in the integration process after the Introduction Program. The fifth chapter focuses on the analysis and discussion of my literature, my theories, as well as my findings. This, to confirm my research questions considered as the guide of this purely qualitative research. The sixth and final chapter is devoted to concluding remarks, policy recommendations, and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The existing literature plays a key role in social science research (Bryman, 2016). This thesis is based on the academic literature drawn from several works to find appropriate theories related to my research objectives to adequately answer my research questions. This part will be devoted to the discussion of the literature produced within the framework of my research to present the theories retained for this work on the integration of refugees. The study focuses on the limits to access to jobs after the Introduction Program that hinder the integration of immigrant refugees in the municipality of Kristiansand, in Norway.

2.2 Literature Review

The causes of migration are numerous, as I indicated in the introductory part. In this work, my attention is focused on refugee immigrants who have had Norway as their host country. Based on the work of Bratsberg, Raaum and Røed (2016) on “labour market integration of refugees in Norway”, the term 'refugee' in the context of this study as well refers to resettled refugees in Norway as part of the resettlement program of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, but also to asylum seekers who arrived in Norway independently fleeing the atrocities committed in their countries. Norway, through its famous welfare state system, considered one of the successful examples of socio-economic welfare, has made it the target and destination of many refugees for decades. Once in Norway as a host country and the residency issue has been regularized, immigrant refugees are placed under the full responsibility of authorized institutions (municipalities) which fully support them in the process of their integration under the Introduction Program.

Before focusing on the Post-Introduction Program phase, which is the subject of this work, my attention first turned to the Introduction Program as the basis for the integration of refugees in Norway. This program is inspired by the welfare state which forms the ideological basis not only of Norway but also of other Nordic countries (Andersen, 1984). Discovering how the Introduction Program works, considering its positive and negative aspects, allowed me to understand its limits, knowing that this program has been the subject of divergent criticism from several researchers since its launch in 2004 (Hagelund, 2005; Fernandes, 2015). To understand

some important claims from different researchers, I looked at the case of Nordic countries in general and ended with that of Norway in particular.

2.2.1 Nordic Perspectives on Immigrants' Integration in the Labour Market

I mentioned again in the introductory part of this work that the migratory flow is believed to be one of the oldest phenomena in the world. Over 50 years ago, Denmark, Norway and Sweden moved from emigrant societies to immigrant societies (Olwig, 2011). It has been observed in Nordic countries that in recent decades the number of migrants and the percentage of the population born outside the European Union (EU) have increased considerably (Djuve & Kavli, 2018). These migratory movements in general, and especially the massive and sudden influx of refugees in 2015 to Western countries in general and Nordic countries in particular, have stimulated new political debates on the question of the integration of migrants in general and immigrant refugees in particular in these countries (Søholt & Aasland, 2019).

Through their famous ideological approach to the welfare state with strong social democratic governments, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden have developed a system based on the socio-economic welfare of their societies (Olwig, 2011). It has been pointed out by Andersen (1984 cited in Olwig, 2011, p.180) that these countries are based on the universalist Nordic model, that is to say that welfare services emanate from national agencies and are closely integrated into the public sector while being supported by general taxation (Ibid.). This explains why the success of the Nordic model of social protection lies quite simply in the willingness of national populations to pay high taxes to ensure general welfare (Olwig, 2011). Though the Nordic model of social protection constitutes the ideological basis of the Nordic countries in general and the Nordic countries in particular, for many academics this model should be reinforced by other programs within the framework of a sustainable integration of refugees. According to Djuve and Kavli (2018), to meet the traditional challenge of the Nordic model of social protection, characterized by universal welfare services, the Nordic countries have launched strong programs to facilitate the integration of refugees into the labour market.

The Introduction Program as a reinforcement of the Nordic model of social protection was first launched by Denmark in 1991, followed by Sweden in 1999 and Norway in 2004 (Fernandes, 2015). This program was created to attempt to address the challenge of unemployment, marginalization, social exclusion, and discrimination of newly arrived non-Western refugees in order to facilitate them in the integration process (Ibid). For Fernandes (2015), the Introduction

Program is a combination of the policy of activation and integration of refugees. Djuve and Kavli (2018), have considered it to be a dual-nature activation policy, it seeks to increase labour market opportunities for refugees but also applies sanctions to regulate their behaviour.

These vast programs launched by the Nordic countries within the framework of the integration of refugees with the Introduction Program as a driving force do not seem to solve the refugee difficulties and challenges in the Post-Introduction Program phase, according to the observation of several researchers. For Fernandes (2015), access to the labour market as one of the essential elements for the successful and sustainable integration of refugees, poses enormous difficulties in the Nordic countries. Jakobsen, Korpi and Lorentzen (2018) reported that identifying insufficient integration of refugees into the labor market is a major problem in Nordic countries. Djuve and Kavli (2018) noted that the highly skilled labour market in Nordic countries has proven difficult to integrate for non-Western refugees. While highlighting the imbalance of access to the labour market between refugees, other migrants, and natives. They added (Djuve & Kavli, 2018) by asserting that, although they have legal access to the labour market and there have been significant integration efforts, finding a place in the local labour market remains a serious problem for refugees. In their work on “state-assisted integration”, based on the experience of Sweden and Norway, the observation of Valenta and Bunar (2010) was such that the integration policies of these two countries, although they emphasize the principle of protection, they have not yet succeeded in integrating refugees on an equal footing with the rest of the population.

2.2.2 Discussions on the Integration of Refugees in the Labour Market in Norway

As regards Norway, several studies on the integration of immigrants highlight the problem of the accessibility of refugees to the labour market. Bratsberg, Raaum and Røed (2016) found that the integration of refugees into the Norwegian labour market has not been as successful as one might expect. This low accessibility in the Norwegian labour market means that refugees are taken as problems of social and cultural integration, but also as financial burdens for the Norwegian welfare state (Abamosa, Hilt & Westrheim, 2020, p. 629). This conception has led the Norwegian political agenda to revisit the question of the integration of refugees (Ibid). Although they are aware of financial efforts and political and strategic improvements, the work of Bratsberg, Raaum and Røed (2016) and many other researchers (Valenta & Bunar, 2010; Hardøy & Schøne, 2014; Djuve & Kavli, 2018; Friberg & Midtbøen, 2018) demonstrated that

the full integration of non-Western refugees and equal access to the Norwegian labour market between non-Western refugees, Western immigrants and the natives population remains unrealistic and requires other policies and appropriate strategies.

Among the reasons for this gap between refugees and the rest of the Norwegian population in terms of integration into the labour market, Bratsberg, Raaum and Røed (2016) gave three. First, most refugees have post-traumatic physical or psychological challenges from wars and other atrocities committed in their countries of origin. Djuve and Kavli (2018) pointed out that trauma as a reason for migration is a challenge that prevents refugees from entering the labour market. Second, most of them lack basic education (Bratsberg, Raaum & Røed, 2016). Friberg and Midtbøen (2018) underlined this point by specifying that 70% of African refugees in Norway have an education that does not exceed the level of primary school, unlike European immigrant workers who are 17%. Language proficiency is the third reason for the gap in the labour market between refugees and the rest of the Norwegian population, according to Bratsberg, Raaum and Røed (2016). In this same perspective, Godøy (2017) documented that, the language problem and the low level of education generally constitute a serious obstacle for immigrant refugees to access the labour market. This indicates that most refugees therefore need a long time to acquire the skills demanded by the employees (Bratsberg, Raaum & Røed, 2016).

Employment plays a crucial role in the integration of immigrants. Beyond the salary that the individual earns from the work, it also offers him/her the possibility of learning the language, the culture, the functioning of the labour market, even of creating networks, and other important factors which can facilitate the integration process (Lundborg, 2013). However, despite all these possible opportunities mentioned, employment inequalities between refugees and the rest of the Norwegian population remain significant and are due according to Friberg and Midtbøen (2018) to the low level of human capital. This led Bratsberg, Raaum and Røed (2016, p.49) to believe that it is not sufficient to help refugees into a first job through the Introduction Programme. The risk is that jobs can be short-lived, and particularly so for refugees (Ibid.). Hayfron (2001) argued that language proficiency is important in the integration process but not sufficient in the labour market, as salary is not necessarily determined by the language of the country's language. This observation by Hayfron (2001), even if it goes back almost two decades, remains valid because recently mentioned by Bratsberg, Raaum and Røed (2016) and Friberg and Midtbøen (2018), who according to them Norway should think more about investing in the human capital.

The low level of human capital according to Bratsberg, Raaum and Røed (2016) explains the low rate of integration of refugees into the labour market. Education is therefore an essential factor in overcoming the problem of integration (Ibid).

However, the lack and / or misuse of human capital has always been one of the main causes of the failure of immigrant refugees to integrate into the labour market in Norway according to several studies (Hardoy & Schøne, 2014; Støren & Wiers-Jensen, 2010; Larsen, Rogne & Birkelund, 2018). Although education is seen as an opportunity to promote access to the labour market in Norway, compared to the natives Norwegians, an important number of non-Western educated immigrants work in jobs for which they are overqualified (Larsen, Rogne & Birkelund, 2018). In their research, Larsen, Rogne and Birkelund (2018, p. 79) have defined overqualification as being a mismatch between the qualifications required for a given job, or the general level of education of the person holding an employee, and the qualifications held by the individual job occupant. Beyond this question of overqualification in employment and others discussed above, according to Godøy (2017, p. 32), in Norway, non-Western immigrant refugees as a group are characterized by a high rate of dependency on social assistance as well as low earnings and employment rates compared to the majority population.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This research takes into consideration three theoretical perspectives that I will detail, and which will constitute a theoretical framework for this study. These three theories are: the theory of the welfare state, of human capital and that of social integration. The three theories are well linked within the framework of this project. The welfare state as the ideological basis of Norway focuses on the socio-economic well-being of the citizens. The latter support this system by paying high taxes to guarantee general well-being (Olwig, 2011). When refugees arrive in Norway, they benefit from this welfare state system in their integration process, so that in the Post-Introduction Program phase they can be self-sufficient and participate in the socio-economic development of the country (Norway). What I consider to be a win-win operation. Thus, helping them to enter the labour market is crucial to facilitate their integration but also to promote the national economy.

Upon arrival, all refugees, whether less or overeducated, have an obligation to integrate into the Norwegian education system to acquire an acceptable level of human capital enabling them

to enter the labour market. According to several researchers cited above (Lundborg, 2013; Bratsberg, Raaum & Røed, 2016; Godøy, 2017), human capital is an essential element for the sustainable integration of refugee migrants in Western host countries. However, although human capital facilitates the integration of refugees into the labour market, massive access, and other inequalities in the labour market persist. This led me to add the theory of social integration, known to be multidimensional and interacting with all possible aspects of the integration of refugees both in the labour market and in society in general. It gives the researcher a fulfilled and open mind and above all the flexibility to address, among all its aspects, those that are relevant to his/her research.

2.3.1 Welfare State

The question of the integration of immigrant refugees has always been linked to the welfare state in European host countries in general and in Nordic countries in particular where this concept (welfare state) plays an important role. The region of Nordic countries long known as generous has been instrumental in welcoming the settling immigrant refugees from fleeing wars and other atrocities in their respective countries (Joyce, 2019). Building on their basic pillar of the welfare state, Nordic countries offer refugee immigrants social protection, on the same basis as indigenous citizens (Brochmann & Hagelund, 2012). The roots of this Nordic ideological basis, according to Kuhnle (2000) rise for more than a century. Already at the start of the 20th century, the vision of promoting social welfare entered Norwegian political discourse and debates, giving rise to the concept of “popular insurance”; shortly afterwards, still in the same framework of ideas, the Swedish social democrats also came into play by adopting in their turn the term “people's home” (Kuhnle, 2000). Terms that then and until now embody the inclusiveness that characterizes the Nordic welfare state (Ibid.). According to Kahanec and Zimmermann (2011, p. 286) Nordic countries are characterised by steady inflows and outflows of migrants, economic prosperity, and a generous welfare state based on social democratic traditions.

However, the welfare state is a concept debated and discussed for several decades by various academics and in several organized societies around the world. Generally, the definitions of welfare state are based on the average standard of living, political democracy, and the role of the state in the distribution of welfare in the society (Korpi, 1983, p. 185). To define the concept of "welfare state", most scholars refer to Asa Briggs' definition which has three parts. Briggs

(1961, p. 228) defines welfare state as a state in which organized power is deliberately used (through politics and administration) in an effort to modify the play of market forces in at least three directions; first of all by guaranteeing individuals and families a minimum income irrespective of the market value of their work or their property; second, by narrowing the extent of insecurity by enabling individuals and families to meet certain “social contingencies” (for example, sickness, old age and unemployment) which lead otherwise to individual and family crises; and the last or the third, by ensuring that all citizens without distinction of status or class are offered the best standards available in relation to a certain agreed range of social services.

This definition of Asa Briggs according to Andersen (2012) has a Nordic tendency where the welfare state is applied without discrimination and plays an essential role in ensuring the living conditions of each individual, from birth to death. As the life of every Nordic has always been valued in Nordic countries, that of immigrant refugees also receives the same value in these countries. Joyce (2019) notes that the Nordic countries, through their ideology of the welfare state, have always been characterized by their generosity in welcoming immigrant refugees while being directly involved in their integration process. Around the 1960s and 1970s, following the reception of large numbers of refugees and humanitarian immigrants, Nordic countries gradually began to wear a hat as a popular destination for refugee immigrants (Joyce, 2019). These refugees, settled in 1960, arrived when aid from the welfare state had already been set up in the Nordic countries’ policies, to face certain social problems; universal old-age pensions, health insurance, work accident insurance, family allowances and maternity leave (Brochmann & Hagelund, 2012). However, as the concept of the welfare state developed, the Nordic countries also embarked on reforms to adapt it to current realities and make future projections, which in 1990 led some countries to think of reducing a bit their generosity, but also to introduce objectives until 2010, such as the structural reforms of old-age pensions (Kuhnle, 2000). As for Norway, according to Kuhnle (2000), instead of decreasing, it increased quite clearly both in terms of overall coverage (parental leave scheme) and generosity of benefits (minimum pensions, family allowances).

Beyond the physical protection, which is the main reason for their displacement, on the one hand immigrant refugees come to the host countries with the idea of working to improve their living conditions, on the other hand the host countries await them with open arms, not only to find refuge but also to work in order to contribute to the general well-being through the payment of taxes. Brochmann and Hagelund (2012) argued in the same logic by showing that there is a

strained relationship between the welfare state and the immigration of refugees in the Nordic countries, a relationship which they considered as mutual benefit, or which goes in two continuous directions. The Introduction Program, which is a clear illustration of the welfare state, was launched in turn according to each country, in 1991 by Denmark, then by Sweden in 1994, and by Norway in 2004 (Fernandes, 2015). According to Hagelund (2005), the Introduction Program created exclusively for refugee immigrants in Norway is a two-face program; financial and educational, it is financial support while the participant is in training (full time) to become an independent member of Norwegian society. However, a dilemma between migration and the sustainability of the welfare state has emerged in public debates in Norway, on the one hand, the migration of relatively young people of working age to support the aging population; and on the other hand, the cost of immigration, especially refugees (Tronstad, et al., 2018).

Indeed, this generous act of welcoming refugee immigrants is costly for the receiving countries, and especially for Norway, which devotes a lot of resources to it during and even after the Introduction Program. However, immigrant refugees are a treasure if they are used profitably, integrating them into the labour market to become productive and self-reliant (Larsen, Rogne & Birkelund, 2018). Paradoxically, several authors (Valenta & Bunar, 2010; Hardøy & Schøne, 2014; Djuve & Kavli, 2018; Friberg & Midtbøen, 2018) have documented inequalities in access to the labour market in Norway, where the most vulnerable in relation to Ethnic Norwegians, Western immigrants and others are non-Western refugee immigrants. Yet immigrant refugees not only worry about getting the job, but also have this willingness to participate in the general well-being. Therefore, although Norway is characterized by generosity but in a different light and beyond positive rhetoric about the value of diversity and external impulses, non-Western refugee immigrants are seen as a burden on the welfare state, something which negatively impacts their integration (Brochmann & Hagelund, 2012).

2.3.2 Human Capital

The integration of refugee immigrants through human capital has always been seen by host societies as an effective way to ensure their autonomy and participate in general well-being. Choudhury and Mishra (2010) defined human capital as a theory that refers to education, training, and expertise (or the acquisition of skills). Constant and Larsen (2004) noted that the formation of human capital constitutes a contribution to individual progress, to the

improvement of the standard of living, to the growth of economic development and to the reduction of inequalities. This assertion was supported by Tranæs and Zimmermann (2004) who, while indicating that education is the basic form of human capital, demonstrated that the education of immigrants in host countries is a profitable investment for the future if properly promoted. Becker (2009) added, pointing out that education and training are important investments in human capital. Qualification is therefore essential in Western societies where immigrant refugees mostly arrive without education. This is a key factor promoting their integration not only into the labour market so that they are productive, but also into society in general.

When immigrant refugees arrive in host countries, the first barrier they usually face is language. Language is a major asset of post-migration human capital (Hayfron, 2001), but which unfortunately constitutes a handicap for less educated and even overeducated refugee immigrants to access the various opportunities in host countries. According to Hayfron (2001), acquiring language skills enables immigrants to acquire important information about jobs and income, and to talk to potential employers in their host country about skills acquired before their migration. Sanroma, Ramos and Simon (2008, p. 224) argue that the lower the level of language proficiency, the lower the valuation of the human capital of immigrants acquired in their country of birth in the host country, since the language conditions the productivity of the rest of their skills. Language and education are two essential elements without which one cannot integrate into society in general and in particular into the labour market in most organized host societies. This is why De Vroome and Tubergen (2010) noted that the reception of immigrant refugees in most Western countries where access to employment requires a certain mastery of the local language and a certain level of education, revolves around the concept of human capital. Government policy through the famous Introduction Program focused on education and access to the labour market in Nordic countries in general, and Norway in particular, is a clear illustrative example in support of this claim (Djuve & Kavli, 2018).

Although the Introduction Program is essential for Norwegian language learning and civic education, it alone is not enough to make immigrant refugees competitive in the Norwegian labour market highly demanding in terms of human capital (Bratsberg, Raaum & Røed, 2016). Bratsberg, Raaum and Røed (2016) suggested not finding a first job for refugee immigrants while they are still in the Introduction Program, believing that this could have a negative impact in the future; for example, the work may be short. Thus, even after the Introduction Program,

less educated and even more educated participants have an interest in improving their human capital in relation to the demands of the Norwegian labour market, since the human capital acquired in their country of origin is not sufficiently considered by Norwegian employers (Hardøy & Schøne, 2014). To motivate immigrant refugees to continue their education and acquire more formal skills, the Norwegian government passed a law on first January 2021 extending the duration of the Introduction Program for those who wish to complete secondary education, in order to maximize their possibility of either continuing their studies or finding a relevant job (IMDi, 2021).

Education in Norway is both a right and an obligation (Yildiz, 2019), first accumulating knowledge during and after the Introduction Program through education and other trainings to meet the demands of the labour market is imperative (Bratsberg, Raaum & Røed, 2016). Something that the Norwegian government supports through its equal opportunities policies promoting the access of refugee immigrants to human capital on the same basis as native Norwegians and other immigrants living in Norway (Abamosa, Hilt & Westrheim, 2020). Brekke and Mastekaasa (2008) argue that the more human capital is accumulated in the host country, the more the differences in the labour market between natives and immigrants should tend to narrow.

Bridging the gap between immigrant refugees and native Norwegians also requires the inclusion of overeducated people in higher education. The literature has shown that although they are not numerous, refugees who arrive in host countries with a high level of human capital in terms of education, skills and experience integrate more quickly than less educated (Djuve & Kavli, 2018; Badwi, Ablo & Overå, 2018). The study of De Vroome and Tubergen (2010) on the work experience of refugees in the Netherlands indicated that the education acquired before and after the migration of refugees has both a positive impact on their integration. In order to include highly qualified immigrants in universities and other higher institutes, the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, through the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT), carefully and individually examine the case of each refugee immigrant interested in the process so that the eligible person obtains approval (Yildiz, 2019; Toker, 2020). However, although the initiative is good, the process turns out to be very demanding, and requires sufficient resources, time (not less than a year) and motivation (Toker, 2020), this demotivates some participants and ends up in jobs for which they are overqualified, and others become unemployed.

De Vroome and Tuberge (2010) argue that the education acquired by immigrants in the host country is an important predictor of employment than education in the home country. However, although the policy of access to human capital has proved its worth in Norway, strategies for the successful integration of immigrant refugees into the labour market still appear to be difficult (Badwi, Ablo and Overå, 2018). According to Badwi, Ablo and Overå (2018, p. 27), successful integration into the labour market “is simply a matter of securing a permanent paid full-time job and a position closely matching the type and level of skill of the individual”. Finding a job in Nordic host countries in general and in Norway in particular remains difficult for non-western immigrant refugees compared to natives and Western immigrants (Valenta & Bunar, 2010; Hardøy & Schøne, 2014; Djuve & Kavli, 2018; Friberg & Midtbøen, 2018). Djuve and Kavli (2018), on the case of Norway, underlined that despite the effort to accumulate human capital in the host country, immigrant refugees still seem not to unlock the issue of access to the local labour market. And those who manage to find work after acquiring human capital in Norway, some of them face wage disadvantages compared to native Norwegians (Brekke & Mastekaasa, 2008). According to Brekke and Mastekaasa (2008), although residence time in Norway reduces inequalities, the considerable differences persist even after more than 10 years.

Extensive research on immigrants and refugees has also indicated that the pre-migration human capital of non-Western immigrants, and in particular refugees, faces serious constraints in the labour market in host countries. The characteristics of immigrants' countries of origin have a crucial influence on their human capital acquired in their country of origin (Sanroma, Ramos & Simon, 2008). Immigrants from countries where the language, education, culture, management system and economic development are very different from those in host countries, face scepticism about their human capital, hence the inequality in the labour market in relation to the ethnic population (Ibid.). This favours the rapid integration of Western immigrants into the labour market compared to non-Western refugees, without adding to it all the other inter-Western agreements of which they are also beneficiaries. Friberg and Midtbøen (2018) also added that the lack of verified information on the educational attainment of most immigrants and especially refugees in Norway exposes them to low-paid work. Thus, and very often, employers rely on indirect indicators such as; gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, immigration status or race to enter the labour market and again with high intensity immigrants (Ibid).

In their work based on the case of Norway, Hardøy and Schøne (2014, pp. 51-52) mentioned four of several that may exist, why there may be low returns to pre-immigration education for non-western immigrants:

- (1) Education acquired in the country of origin may be of good quality but not perfectly transferable across national borders. De Vroome and Tubergen (2010), in their study on work experience of refugees in the Netherlands, noted that the differences in the quality and compatibility of education of refugees from their countries of origin compared to countries of reception make employers sceptical about their performance. And when the skills of the countries of origin are not fully or not at all transferable, immigrants have no choice but to find jobs where they are overqualified and therefore poorly paid (Hardøy & Schøne, 2014), or acquire more years of schooling than natives in the same job (Chiswick & Miller, 2009).
- (2) As the quality of the education system may vary from country to country, the quality of education acquired before immigration can also play an important role (Hardøy & Schøne, 2014). However, prejudices in Western host societies in terms of the origin of the education system discourage non-Western immigrants from accessing relevant employment opportunities compared to Western immigrants.
- (3) Hardøy and Schøne (2014, p. 52) have also shown that imperfect information on relevant jobs leads immigrants to seek jobs for which they are overqualified. This often concerns immigrants with higher education, the mismatch between their level of education and the work they do can have a negative effect on their performance (Ibid).
- (4) The last reason concerns discrimination against immigrants in the labour market. According to Hardøy and Schone (2014, p. 52), accumulated work experience in Norway and time spent in the Norwegian labour market are two factors reducing discrimination, as relevant labour market information will already be available to immigrants. However, if preference-based discrimination against non-Western immigrants is significant, even spending more time in Norway cannot have any positive effect (Ibid.).

2.3.3 Social Integration

While refugee immigrants seek to meet the demands of access to the labour market by acquiring the human capital of the host country, social integration through the establishment of the social

network is at the same time essential. It improves their relationships with members of other ethnic groups by reducing prejudice and conflict, and accesses the social capital of indigenous peoples, thereby facilitating their economic and cultural integration (Martinovic, Tubergen & Maas, 2009). According to Martinovic, Tubergen and Maas (2009), establishing a social network with natives can make it easier for immigrants to find a job, for instance, or to improve the language of the host society. The theory of social integration has been defined by Hackman and Bosswick (2006) as a process of including immigrants in the system and the creation of relationships with the indigenous population in the host society. For Esser (2004), the theory of social integration consists in including immigrants in the social system as individual actors (for instance the integration into the labour market of the host society), as members of an ethnic society or as part of a transnational network. Social integration is also defined as a functional adjustment to foreign society, including employment, education, social inclusion, and active citizenship (Nieuwboer & Van't Rood, 2016, p. 30). Martinovic, Tubergen and Maas (2009, p. 870) consider social integration as the theory referring to the incorporation of immigrants into the labour market and the adoption of the values and customs of the host country. The theory of social integration therefore turns out to be better placed to address the issue of immigrants and especially refugees during and after the Introduction Program in the host countries, it is present in all stages throughout their integration process.

Laurensyeva and Venturini (2017) demonstrated that social integration is a two-sided concept; on the one hand, immigrants rely on the development of a feeling of belonging to the host society, which leads them to agree to act according to the values and standards of the host society, but also to form a social capital to better integrate into society. And on the other hand, the indigenous populations also have an important role to play to facilitate social integration, this is only possible if immigrants are accepted as members of the society of the host country (Ibid.). A mutual consideration that according to Laurensyeva and Venturini (2017) can lead to the improvement of individual well-being, the strengthening of social cohesion and access to considerable economic implications. In addition to showing the importance of establishing social networks, such as finding a solution to social needs and improving social relations, building economic and political capital, Ali, Zendo and Somers (2021) added, noting that the society also has a responsibility to help refugee immigrants develop a sense of belonging to their new community in order to better integrate.

The theory of social integration is qualified by several authors as multidimensional. It gives the researcher the opportunity to address several points relating to the integration of immigrants and in particular refugees in host societies. Integration as a key term in the context of immigration, it is seen as a process to become an accepted part of society (Ali, Zendo & Somers, 2021) and therefore requires the efforts of all stakeholders in interaction in the host country. This explains the need for the social network, which could be simply defined as a network of relationships or social resources that surrounds individuals, groups or organizations and the characteristics of these links (Ali, Zendo & Somers, 2021, p. 3). Hence the need for social networks in social integration (Ibid.).

The literature on the integration of immigrants underlines that the establishment of the social network is crucial for their integration both in the labour market and in society in general. The social network is generally considered by the authors as the unit of measure of social capital. Thus, Putnam (1994, p. 7) defines social capital as features of social organizations such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. For Turner (2006, p.557), social capital results from relationships between individuals, groups or communities that provide access to valuable benefits and / or resources. Bourdieu (1986) indicated that the volume of social capital that an individual possesses depends on the size of the network of connections that he/she can effectively mobilize and the volume of resources likely to benefit those to whom he/she is linked. It simply means that the more an immigrant refugee extends his/her network in the host society, the more he/she integrates and the more he/she has access to advantages such as improving the language of the host country, access to employment, and other relevant information promoting his/her integration in general.

Several studies have indicated that, although timidly, immigrant refugees gradually weave their social capital in the host country through friendships, neighbourhoods, schools, voluntary social organizations, or the like, and much more once they start working. In his study on “the workplace as an arena for identity affirmation and social integration of immigrants”, focusing on the case of Norway, Valenta (2008) noted that immigrants active in the labour market are more advantageous to widen the links, compared to those who do not work, because they become passive and isolated. This has led to the estimation that the degree of inclusion or exclusion depends to a large extent on the open paths of economic integration but also on the level of access to the labour market (Ibid.). However, any social relationship, whatever its nature, contributes to the establishment of social capital in host societies. The work of Putnam

and other researchers have identified different types on which social capital relies. Putnam (2000) made a distinction between bonding which refers to the strengthening of relations between homogeneous groups, it is therefore a link which concerns similar groups, among other fraternal and / or family, ethnic, and so forth, and bridging which refers to dissimilar or heterogeneous groups, such as two different ethnic groups or others.

In relation to intra-ethnic which are often natural and easy to establish thanks to similar origins, culture, norms and values, inter-ethnic relations and especially with the natives of host societies are created over time. According to Laurensyeva and Venturini (2017), the social interaction of immigrants improves as they live in host countries. They added that integrating the potential of policies into social networks can promote social inclusion (Ibid). Although it is often difficult to establish inter-ethnic relations with the indigenous population, they further facilitate the integration of immigrants and in particular refugees into the relevant labour market. Gericke et al. (2018) found that in Germany, the vertical bridging of social capital favours refugees more to find adequate work than the horizontal bonding, which makes them find low-skilled jobs, and sometimes unemployed. Badwi, Ablo and Overå (2018) found that Ghanaians who rely on bonding face more barriers in the labour market than those who seek bridging with ethnic Norwegians because they end up in relevant jobs (professionals and / or semi-professionals).

A study on “the social integration of Syrian immigrant refugees in Canada”, carried out by Ali, Zendo and Somers (2021) showed that access to broader social capital was possible through bridging between a family of Syrian refugees and the Canadians sponsors, but also through bonding, they succeeded in weaving social ties with those with whom they had the same language and the same culture. They went on to say that the mutual acceptance of racial, ethnic, religious and class differences rather than seeking to assimilate them promotes their social ties and therefore their social integration into Canadian society (ibid.). Cultural rapprochement rather than assimilation is essential in the social integration of immigrant refugees into host societies, as social capital is established through social interactions. According to Adler Zawhlen, Nagel, and Schlesinger (2018) immigrants have social or cultural ties with both the host society and the society of origin. Although immigrant refugees integrate by learning the language and other cultural values of the host societies, adults in middle-aged and older compared to young people cling to the language, norms, the culture, religion, and other traditions of their countries of origin. Social integration must therefore be understood as a

synonym of bicultural integration, even as a process of exchange and reciprocal convergence, unlike purely assimilative concepts (Adler Zawhlen, Nagel & Schlesinger, 2018, p. 27).

However, constraints in accessing opportunities in the host country, such as employment, and others, lead immigrant refugees to abandon the cultural norms and values of their home society. The illustration of the USA case by Laurensyeva and Venturini (2017) in their work on “the social integration of immigrants and the role of politics” underlined that, to confirm their identification as well as that of their children, immigrant refugees abandon their original name at the expense of American names. The same observation was made by Midtbøen (2015) in his study on “Ethnic discrimination in the labour market”, he also noted that in Norway, the foreign names of immigrants constitute a barrier of access to employment, because faced with stereotypical prejudices, such as poor Norwegian skills, and others. An obstacle that even second-generation immigrants encounter when trying to enter the labour market (Ibid.). Thus, changing foreign names to the detriment of Norwegian names would also be a strategy of access to employment, but also a pure assimilation favouring the isolation and social exclusion of refugee immigrants.

Certain discourses around immigration in the Western country also have an exclusive and discriminatory tendency and mainly prevent refugees from accessing various advantages in the host country. Agyare (2021) documented that a significant number of populations in Western host countries believe that immigration creates more insecurity in their countries. Laurensyeva and Venturini (2017), also indicated that the discourses of opponents of immigration in host countries revolve directly or indirectly around exclusive expressions, among others, cultural erosion, threats to national identity and notions of “us versus them”. In Norway, according to Agyare (2021), some behind-the-scenes discussions in the public domain about non-Western immigrants’ touch on aspects of identity, ethnic background, skin colour, race, and nationality. Eriksen (2013), also raised the issue of culture and religion as factors of exclusion in the Norwegian mainstream. This consideration of excluding immigrants and especially non-Western refugees, also taken from other angles by some as charges to the welfare state (Brochmann & Hagelund, 2012), can lead the ethnic Norwegian population and even potential employers to scepticism and block the establishment of social capital and consequently the lack of access to the labour market. It turns out that a need for other policies and strategies beyond those that exist can promote social inclusion and therefore the social integration of immigrant refugees, which I consider beneficial for the economy of the host country.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I explain the appropriate methodological choices retained and their application for the realization of this research. First, I give a detailed description of the research method, research design and research strategies. Then, I tackle the points concerning epistemological and ontological considerations, data collection through qualitative interviews, data analysis method, research ethics, and research challenges.

3.2 Research Method

The integration of refugees has always been a complex issue which, to find the adequate answers, requires in-depth study for a better understanding. As I was interested on the labour market integration experiences of immigrant refugees after the Introduction Program, I chose to apply qualitative research for this project. According to Blaikie (2000), qualitative research aims not only to study the meaning of people's lives but also and above all how they are experienced in real conditions. Bryman (2016, p. 374) notes that, rather than numbers as is the case with quantitative research, qualitative research places more emphasis on words, meaning and understanding. It is a largely interpretivist and constructionist research strategy as reference to epistemological and ontological considerations (ibid.). Yin (2016, p.3) considers qualitative research as a challenge for the researcher to conduct original research that pursues three main objectives, among others, transparency, methodology and respect for evidence. Qualitative research allows the researcher to study and understand the daily lives of many types of people, and what they think about, in many different circumstances (Ibid.). I found this qualitative research method appropriate to approach this project, as my concern is to study and understand the types of experiences in terms of challenges and difficulties immigrant refugees face after completing the Introduction Program in the Municipality of Kristiansand, by focusing on their limits of access to the labor market.

Bryman (2016, p.40) defines a research method as a technique for collecting data. To achieve this, the researcher applies a specific instrument such as in quantitative research, a self-administered questionnaire or structured interview, or in qualitative research a participant observation through which the researcher listens to and watches others (Ibid.). In choosing the qualitative method for this study, I envisioned the in-depth interview in a semi-structured style,

to give myself the opportunity to create an exchange ground to explore the ideas and perspectives of immigrant refugees on their integration after the Introduction Program and to enable them to interpret the questions broadly (O'reilly, 2012). I also used some closed questions to obtain fixed answers for certain criteria as suggested by O'reilly (Ibid.).

3.3 Research Strategies

According to Bryman (2016, p.32), two research methods can be considered as two distinctive groups of social science research strategy, among which, as noted above in this chapter; quantitative research which focuses on quantification or measurement when analyzing and collecting data, unlike qualitative research which generally emphasizes words. He thus defines research strategy as a general orientation to the conduct of social research (Ibid.). In order to properly explore the daily experiences in terms of difficulties and challenges of immigrant refugees in the Post-Introduction Program phase that hinder their integration into the labour market in the Municipality of Kristiansand, I found the qualitative research study to be more effective for this thesis. What they mean through their opinions and their points of view will help me to understand their everyday integration challenges, especially when it comes to access jobs.

There are two main epistemological approaches in each research, they are induction and deduction (Bernard, 2011). By choosing qualitative research as the methodological basis of this work, I applied inductive approach, thus constituting the research strategy of this project. According to Blaikie (2000), data collection is the starting point of the inductive research strategy, and then follows the derivation of generalizations through inductive logic. The core being the relationship between theory and research, instead of testing the theories as is the case with the deductive approach in quantitative research. I rather considered qualitative research by applying the inductive approach, thus emphasizing the generation of theories (Bryman, 2016, pp. 32-33).

In the previous chapter, I applied the deduction approach by relying on pre-existing theoretical considerations through the literature review, a question of benchmark compared to what has already been done in this field of research. Thus, considering the empirical results as a strategic basis and the pre-existing theories as the background, this research is bi-strategic. Although the inductive approach is the main style of this work, the deductive approach also plays an

important role in the sense of comparing empirical data to pre-existing literature review. As Bryman (2016) again states, induction and deduction are two interconnected approaches. In the inductive strategy, there is a minimum of deduction, in the same way, the deduction includes an element of induction (Ibid.). Bernard (2011) shares the same point of view; that real research is never purely inductive or deductive. When the research is based on one of these two epistemological approaches in a project (induction or deduction), it directly or indirectly affects some aspects of the other (Ibid.). Which has been the case with this thesis.

3.4 Research Design

O'reilly (2012) considers a research design to be iterative-inductive research, its revision being continuous as the research evolves. Although qualitative research designs may change over the course of the study (Yin, 2016), researchers are advised to plan the research in advance with a structured and systematic design. As O'reilly (2012, p. 48) concedes, research has to be carefully planned and designed and even replanned and redesigned as it develops. The researcher should therefore be able to state the problem with a title and short description, a longer description with one or two paragraphs, and a full description with a review of the literature to find out what is already known about the topic, methods and what the researcher expect to find out, an open mind being key at the beginning of the research (Ibid.). Blaikie (2000, p. 21) speaks first of anticipating all aspects of research when designing scientific research, and then of planning their execution in an integrated manner. The basic definition of a research design according to Yin (2016) is the logical sequence thus linking empirical data to the initial research questions of a study, and ultimately, to its conclusions. As for Bryman (2016, p.40) a research design provides a framework for data collection and analysis.

There are many types of research design. Bryman (2016, p. 39) speaks of five major research designs, among which, experimental and related designs, cross-sectional design, longitudinal design and its various forms, case study design, and comparative design. The criteria for evaluating the research findings are the main factor for each of them (Ibid.). In the context of this project, I considered case study as my research design. Although there is no formula for applying a case study design in a project, Yin (2014, p. 4) explains its relevance in two ways, the first is that the questions should focus more on explaining some contemporary circumstance (e.g., “how” or “why” some social phenomenon works), the second is that the questions should require more extensive and in-depth description of some social phenomenon (Ibid.). A case

study design addresses a single case in a well-defined way (Yin, 2014; Bryman, 2016). In the same logic as Yin (2014), Bryman (2016) maintains that the researcher's mission is therefore to detect a single case and to analyze it in a broad, intensive, and in-depth manner. In this research, I considered a single case that involved the observation and understanding of immigrant refugees in the Post-Introduction Program phase in order to discover the type of factors at the base of their challenges and difficulties which thus hamper their daily life in terms of integration into society in general and the labour market in particular, in the Municipality of Kristiansand. Therefore, I found the case study to be an appropriate design for this work as my goal was to understand it in depth as suggested by Bryman (2016) and Yin (2014).

3.5 Epistemological and Ontological Considerations

Knowledge being the fundamental basis of all research, this study is based on epistemological and ontological paradigms, the objective being to make a strict selection of relevant knowledge and its social realities. While ontology is interested in the real and objective existence of the world, epistemology seeks to know this world as well as the different possible forms in which this knowledge would take (Della Porta and Keating, 2008, p. 21). Epistemology is generally defined as a theory of knowledge (Blaikie, 2000; Bryman, 2016; Walliman, 2018). According to Della Porta and Keating (2008), it is about how we know things. They distinguish it from belief, as the researcher has the duty to give reasons to convince others (Ibid.). Bryman (2016, p. 24) develops this definition by placing knowledge as the main element of a discipline while asking the question of what or what should be considered and accepted. In the same way, Walliman (2018) defines epistemology as an approach that looks at how things are known and what is considerable and acceptable as knowledge in a discipline. The epistemological approach uses three positions, in particular; positivism, realism and interpretivism (Bryman, 2016, pp. 24-28).

Although these three epistemological positions seem to overlap on certain small points, they are totally different from each other in their logical foundations and in their application to research. Positivism is strongly attached to the natural sciences. According to Bryman (2016), this position uses the methods and principles of the natural sciences in the study of social realities. As Myers (2020) notes, positivism attempts to test theory to expand the field of predictive understanding of phenomena. However, realism implies a reality independent of meaning, and gives access to the tools of the researcher and to theoretical speculation (Bryman,

2016, p. 695). It is a position which involves the categories created by scientists and which refers to real objects in the natural and social worlds (Ibid.). Interpretivism, on the other hand, is concerned with the subjective meaning of social action (Bryman, 2016). According to Della Porta and Keating (2008), the meaning of the subject is the central point of this approach. This position implies that the perceptions of individuals of the outside world favor the understanding of social phenomena or historical facts (Bryman 2016; Della Porta & Keating, 2008).

The definition of ontology according to Della Porta and Keating (2008) in the first paragraph seems to be global as it considers the world in all its interactions. Bryman (2016) defines it as a paradigm that focuses on the nature of social entities (Bryman, 2016, p. 28). He pays much more attention to social interactions. Just as Blaikie (2000) who speaks of the existence of social phenomena while defining ontology. Two contradictory positions constitute the key points of ontological approach, namely objectivism and constructivism. The first position consists in knowing whether to consider social realities as objective realities external to social actors, the second, consists in knowing whether to consider these social realities as social constructions constructed from perceptions and the actions of social actors (Bryman, 2016, p. 28). This second position implies that social phenomena and their meanings are not only produced by social interactions, but also continuously executed by social actors and constantly revised (p. 29).

In the context of this research, I found interpretivism and constructivism to be the appropriate epistemological and ontological positions. The interpretivist position allowed me to deeply understand the social realities of people in a subjective way and in their perspectives through their explanations in order to study them in depth, the subjective meaning being at the base of this approach (Della Porta & Keating, 2008). The use of the constructivist position in this study has helped me to observe and carefully examine social phenomena arising from social interactions.

3.6 Sampling Methods

Blaikie (2000, p. 198) Defines sampling as a selection of elements (members or units) from the population, used to make statements about the entire population. There are several different sampling techniques used in different fields of scientific research. It is therefore up to the researcher to choose the sampling technique well suited to his/her research. Blaikie (2000, p.

199) distinguishes sampling methods into two opposed dimensions; probability versus non-probability and single-stage versus multiple-stage, single-stage combined with probability (simple random, systematic, stratified and cluster), and with non-probability (accidental or convenience, quota, judgmental or purposive and snowball). Based on the research objectives of this study, I combined purposive and snowball sampling techniques, both well known as non-probability sampling techniques and commonly applied in qualitative research (Bryman, 2016 & Blaikie, 2000).

According to Blaikie (2000, p. 205), purposive or judgmental sampling is a technique with multiple uses. The use of this technique is done in the case where it is very costly or impossible to identify a particular population, in addition, it allows the researcher to select certain cases of a particular type, and finally, the last use is to select a variety of types of cases for in-depth investigation (Ibid.). Yin (2016, p. 93) defines purposive sampling as a technique of deliberately choosing samples in order to obtain as much relevant data as possible, which is essentially rich in information given the researcher's topic of study. Bryman (2016) emphasizes that research questions should be placed at the center of sampling considerations when applying the purposive sampling technique to research. Snowball known as network, chain referral or reputational sampling (Blaikie, 2016), is a sampling technique in which the very first participants relevant to the research question allow the researcher to identify, within the predefined sample limit, other participants who have had the same experiences or characteristics relevant for research (Bryman, 2016, p. 415).

Bryman (2016) suggests researchers to use combined sampling techniques in research, such as purposive and snowball are two complementary sampling approaches. The snowball is a technique that is applied quite often after purposive sampling in data collection during the research (p. 419). Before applying the snowball technique, the researcher targets the potential population to be studied and draws from it the relevant sample to be interviewed to address the research question, the initial contacts drawn from the sample connect the researcher to other relevant participants with similar characteristics and experiences (Ibid.). These two sampling techniques have helped me a lot in identifying and reaching all my relevant participants (informants) for the collection of my empirical data. As the case of immigrant refugees is delicate and complex, access to primary data required adequate techniques. Using the purposive sampling technique, I managed to identify Non-western refugee immigrants from different backgrounds in the Post-Introduction Program phase who obtained Kristiansand as their host

municipality, and public officials in the municipality. The snowball being my second sampling technique, allowed me to reach my sample size, as the first immigrant refugees interviewed connected me with others with similar characteristics and experiences as pointed out by Bryman (2016).

3.7 Data Collection Method

Bryman (2016, p. 10) notes that data collection is the central point and the most important step of any research project, he emphasizes the relevance of the data collected as a key criterion to answer the research questions. There are several data collection techniques depending on the research project, whether it is a quantitative or qualitative research method (Bryman 2016; Blaikie, 2000). Within the framework of this thesis, as my main objective was to extract fresh information at the source by listening to immigrant refugees in Post-Introduction Program phase, to understand through their experiences, the factors that hinder their integration especially in the labour market, I found that the interviews were the most suitable technique for this study. However, O'reilly (2012, p. 120) distinguishes three styles of interview; the structured interview used in survey research and only quantitative research, the unstructured interview which is much more free-flowing by focusing more on the conversation than the interview, and the semi-structured interview which is simply a combination of these two styles mentioned. Unstructured and semi-structured interviews being mainly styles of the qualitative research method (Bryman, 2016), this study being purely qualitative, I chose semi-structured interview as the main data collection technique.

As I mentioned in the previous paragraph, this type of interview (Semi-structured) is composed of elements of the structured and unstructured interview style (O'reilly, 2012). Semi-structured interview as highlighted by Braun and Clarke (2013, p. 78), is the most commonly used style in qualitative research. It first allows the researcher to fully explore the ideas with the participants, then to obtain fixed answers for certain other criteria (O'reilly, 2012, p. 120). That is, and again according to Braun and Clarke (2013, p. 78), the researcher has a series of questions, but leaves the possibility for informants to raise issues not anticipated by the researcher. Knowing this and given that my participants felt concerned by the theme affecting their integration experiences while finding jobs characterized by ups and downs, I needed a total involvement to properly orient the discussions during the interview, when it came to open-ended questions.

The collection of my empirical data was only carried out in the Municipality of Kristiansand which was my research area. I had a total of 18 informants, which I subdivided into two different categories. First, I focused on immigrant refugees in the Post-Introduction Program phase, which I saw as the main informants in this research. In order to gain a general overview and properly explore the daily experiences in terms of difficulties and challenges that hinder immigrant refugees to access jobs after the Introduction Program slow down their integration process, I interviewed fourteen non-Europeans immigrant refugees, between 23 to 54 years old, from different countries such as Burundi, DR Congo, Eritreans, Palestine, Somalia and Syria. To these, I added four decision-makers (public officials) in charge of the integration of these immigrant refugees during and after the Introduction Program, to have their point of view for certain clarifications but also to have a bigger picture. Here when I speak of decision makers, I am referring to the Municipality of Kristiansand, where I interviewed; two informants from the Introduction Program, one informant from the Outro program (NAV), and one contact person (NAV) of refugees under the Introduction Program. It is important to mention here again that I carried out my data collection by applying one-on-one in-depth interviews, in a semi-structured style.

As my main participants (immigrant refugees) came from different countries and some of them still had difficulty expressing themselves in Norwegian, I conducted my interviews in languages the participants preferred. I speak several languages such as Norwegian, English, French, and Swahili. It was also about allowing them to use the language in which they felt most comfortable. This also paved the way for better engagement in the discussions and delve into their thoughts when it came to open-ended questions. As Covid-19 influenced a lot, I revised my research methodology in terms of collecting my primary data; all my interviews were conducted through phone calls and recorded with the permission of the participant in a digital recording device. Right after each interview, I was reassured that I had already uploaded the audio to the university's OneDrive and erased it directly from the device. This allowed me to keep the audio in a safe and secure place while doing my transcriptions.

3.8 Data Analysis Method

This research was a qualitative study, collected my primary data through semi-structured interviews. I relied much more on open-ended questions to try to understand clearly, factors

that prevented immigrant refugees from integrating into Norwegian society in general, while focusing on the labour market in the municipality of Kristiansand. As I pointed out in the previous part (3.7 Data collection), due to Covid-19, I did a fully digital fieldwork. All my interviews were conducted via phone calls, using audio-recorder, and uploaded in my University's OneDrive for more protection. After the stages of interviews and transcriptions, I resorted to coding. As Bryman (2016) notes, coding is an effective starting point for data analysis in qualitative research, it allowed me to get to know my transcripts in detail, in order to identify relevant themes related to this study. Bryman (2016, p. 584), defined a theme as follows: it is a category identified by the researcher through the data collected; that relates to the research questions; that builds on codes identified in the transcriptions, and that provides the researcher with the basis for a theoretical understanding of the data collected that can make a theoretical contribution to the literature relating to the research questions. Since I relied on the inductive approach, I let myself be guided by my empirical data, in order to identify the appropriate literature for this study.

I opted for the thematic method to analyse my empirical data, as it organizes and describes all the data collected in a minimal way (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) attested that, although rarely recognized as it should, thematic analysis is the widely used method in qualitative research, allowing not only accessibility but also flexibility when analysing data. The purpose of thematic analysis according to Bryman (2016, p. 11) is to examine the data collected in order to extract the different themes that could be distinguished both between and within transcripts. Thematic analysis is therefore defined by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 79) as a method of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. This thematic analysis method allowed me to discover various aspects of my research subject in order to properly interpret them, as emphasized by Braun and Clark (2006). To better approach my thematic analysis, I carefully followed step by step all the 6 phases proposed by Braun and Clark (2006, pp.87-93); among them, familiarising with your data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report, I provided a detailed explanation as part of my research.

PHASE 1: I familiarized myself with my data when I finished transcribing it, I immersed myself while reading it thoroughly and with interest. This allowed me to gain a much deeper understanding. I opted for a verbatim transcription to keep the participant's voice but also and above all not to lose sight of the originality of my data. Doing all the interviews by myself

fostered a good connection between me and my data while keeping my position of neutrality as a researcher. I started taking notes, marking coding ideas, and making comments using my University's OneDrive via online Microsoft Word. I did this with my entire transcripts, in order to get ready for more formal coding, as suggested by Braun and Clark (2006). I read and re-read my transcripts repeatedly and continuously to familiarize myself with my data. According to Bryman (2016) and Braun and Clark (2006), this constitutes a crucial first step, and forms the basis for the rest of the analysis.

PHASE 2: As reading the data was a repeated exercise, I got familiar with my transcripts and started getting more ideas. Although I had already extracted a multitude of codes for not having been selective, it took me a second step of generating the initial codes with a more in-depth analysis in order to identify first of all interesting aspects and also repeated codes (Braun and Clark, 2006). I started to get a more precise idea which allowed me to continue coding but this time in an inclusive way until I identified as many sub-themes and themes as possible for an intensive analysis (Ibid.). At this step, I used my university's OneDrive and transferred my coded data from Microsoft Word to Excel spreadsheets for better processing.

PHASE 3: In this third phase, the use of Excel spreadsheets allowed me to carefully collect all my initially coded data, I found myself with a very long list of the different codes. I moved on to identifying potential themes by sorting codes, once the code data had been extracted, I grouped them within the themes identified as suggested by Braun and Clark (2006, p. 89). This not only facilitated the analysis of my different codes but also a more in-depth reflection on how to combine these different codes to form a global theme (Ibid.). At this stage, while letting myself be guided by my research questions, I ended up with the following sub-themes and themes; Welfare state, refugees' participation into the Introduction Program, Post-Introduction Program phase, language proficiency, refugees' education background, Approval of school documents for refugees in Norway, education acquired in Norwegian as a sine qua non, establishing social network, socio-cultural effects on integration, refugees integration into the labour market, and public policies on integration.

PHASE 4: When I started this fourth phase I ended up with an interesting number of sub-themes and themes. It took me a rigorous examination to identify the real themes, those that could be merged into one theme, and others that should be split into two separate themes (Braun & Clark, 2006). At this level, I combined the Introduction Program and the Post-Introduction Program

phase as sub-themes into one theme, which is the welfare state system. From language proficiency, refugees' education background, approval of school documents for refugees in Norway, and education acquired in Norwegian as a sine qua non, emerged human capital theme. And in my last theme which concerned social integration, came from, establishing social network, the socio-cultural effects on integration, refugees' integration into the labour market, mainstream discourse on integration, and public strategies on integration. As this phase requires going back and forth in the analysis, I should first reread all my data to reassure myself about the consistency between my themes and all my data and recode all the additional data in my themes (Ibid.). However, as Braun and Clark (2006) pointed out, coding and generating themes is a never-ending process, I stopped when I found several relevant themes that should now be defined and named in the next phase.

PHASE 5: The fifth phase was where all the sub-themes and themes identified and reviewed in the previous phases were to be defined, refined, and named. At this stage, I started with a detailed analysis of each of my themes in order to identify the essence of each of them and their consistency with all my entire data; it was a question of reassuring me about their links and their connections with my research questions (Braun & Clark 2006). I should refine my themes by identifying whether they contained sub-themes, also to make sure the themes did not overlap too much (Ibid.). As per Braun and Clark (2006, p. 92), subthemes are essentially themes within a theme. I closed this phase by clearly defining all my themes and giving them appropriate names covering my entire data. According to Bryman (2016, p. 588), the names can at this stage be considered as concepts.

PHASE 6: The sixth phase was the last step of my thematic analysis, it consisted of writing up the report, which required an intensive final analysis of my final selected themes. The aim at this stage was to ensure consistency between and among my final selected themes. As noted by Bryman (2016), my role was to ensure that my chosen themes were justified by their interconnection and that their implications supported the whole structure. Braun and Clark (2006) argued that the whole idea behind the data within and across themes should be analysed in a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and interesting manner.

3.10 Research Ethics

Conducting social science research requires good ethics. People are often directly or indirectly involved in research, and their participation requires respect and consideration. During interviews, the subjects sometimes discussed are sensitive to the risk of causing them harm.

Several qualitative researchers have argued that ethical issues are inevitable in social science research, identifying them and seeking to resolve them improves the quality of research. O'reilly (2016) indicated that several ethical questions often arise when conducting qualitative research and therefore need to be addressed. Still in the same framework of idea, Bryman (2016) insisted on the fact that ethical questions are unpredictable, they arise at different stages of social research. Through our phone calls, we insert ourselves into people's daily lives, ask them questions about their past experiences, current life, and future perspectives, while writing down and recording about what they are saying (Ibid.). Since participants are the focus of my research, it was of the utmost importance for me to reason in advance about how they will be treated with respect and consideration before, during and even after my research. Insofar as I involve humans as the research subject, I have the obligation, as the general rule indicates, to obtain free and informed consent (Ettikom, 2019). As required by the University of Agder (n.d.), before doing any interviews, I requested approval from the Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD) and started interviewing my participants only when I obtained permission.

Several studies define risk as a probability of harm, which can be physical, psychological or others. In the context of this research, aware that the refugees' case is too sensitive given their past experience characterized by incurable scars, I had an obligation and a responsibility to consult with interest the Etikkom documents for advice and strategies for conducting my research without harming our participants. As highlighted in the overview, my participants are the centrepiece of this work. It is well mentioned in Etikkom (2019) that all research must be developed in a logic of respect for individuals. While respecting their dignity, their privacy, and explaining to them the reason for their participation, this work has not only an obligation of respect but also a responsibility to protect all participants. All those who participate from far or near to its realization.

Again, in the context of not harming my participants, given the persistence of this scourge of Covid-19 which continues to ravage the whole world in general and Kristiansand, the

municipality which constitutes our field of study, I reviewed my research plan. Before, my project was to do an ethnographic study, with field trips during face-to-face interviews in order not only to listen but also to experience the realities that my participants are confronted with in their integration process. However, my sense of responsibility towards my participants led me to think about a new method which consisted of doing fully digital fieldwork. Through telephone calls, I joined all my participants to ask them questions about their life experience in terms of challenges and difficulties while integrating into the Norwegian society after the Introduction Program in Kristiansand municipality. My participants connected me with others, and this is how I reached my sample, what Bryman (2016) calls, snowball method (3.6 Sampling Methods).

As Bryman (2016) points out, the researcher has a duty to give participants as much information as possible about the research to make informed decisions about whether to participate or not. According to Etikkom (2019), adequate information should be provided to participants about the entire research process from start to finish. The participant therefore has the full right to understand the reason for his participation in the research before giving his consent (Ibid.). Regarding the above, to get the consent of my participants, before each of my interviews, I had the duty to read the letter of consent and explain to them the objective of my research and why I chose them to participate. I applied this to immigrant refugees and decision makers (NAV and Introduction Program) as well. It is important here to remind that I collected my data by applying one-to-one in-depth interviews.

Regarding the Internet, it is well known that the Internet is an important tool in today's world characterized by the concept of "globalization", it facilitates us in many tasks including scientific research. However, with the emergence of social networks (media) and other mafia sites, it remains a dangerous tool in terms of confidentiality and anonymity. Aware, and since my fieldwork is completely digital in collecting data, I avoided all social media to conduct my interviews. I avoided the use of nicknames or pseudonyms, simply because they do not constitute any guarantee of the anonymity of my participants, thus, I re-identified all of them so as not to be traced and thus ensure their protection as suggested by Etikkom (2019.).

3.11 Research Challenges

As I mentioned in the previous point, it was challenging for me to address a subject as sensitive as this one, which involved focusing on the traumatic experiences of refugees. It was also a challenge to approach the informants to express and share their flight from their country of origin to Norway, and their process of integration into Norwegian society and more particularly into the labour market. The diversity of cultural backgrounds is another challenging aspect as I had to modify my conduct of the interview based on their comfort and trying to understand their cultural barriers and background analysis. There were refugees who refused to participate, for some it was difficult to reach them for follow-up purposes, several left the interview mid-term.

The additional challenge was conducting digital interviews during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Initially, finding informants became difficult due to the lockdown and strict restrictions. Later, my personal contacts helped me find informants willing to share their experiences. Due to the strict lockdown and the digital conduct of interviews, I estimated that finding informants would be less complicated if there was no pandemic.

CHAPTER FOUR: EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This research examines the various difficulties and challenges that immigrant refugees face in their daily lives, after the Introduction Program in the Municipality of Kristiansand. I pay particular attention to the main factors which limit their access to employment after the Introduction Program and which hinder their integration. As I mentioned in the previous chapter (Chap. three), this study is qualitative, the collection of my primary data was done through semi-structured interviews. In total, my empirical data consisted of eighteen informants, including fourteen non-western immigrant refugees from different countries (Burundi, DRC, Eritreans, Palestine, Somalia and Syria), composed of eight males and six females, aged 23 to 54 years old; and four public officials including two from the Introduction Program, one from the Outro / NAV (this program was created for those who have completed the introduction program and could not study or find work), and one contact person (NAV), all from the Municipality of Kristiansand. As I speak fluently different languages including Norwegian, English, Swahili and French, and my participants come from different backgrounds, and as some of them have less than five years in Norway to speak Norwegian fluently, I gave them the possibility of choosing among the four languages mentioned the one in which they felt most comfortable. This, allowed me to engage in the discussions fully and thoroughly in order to properly extract potential information for my research.

This study is based on three research questions which therefore constitute the main guide, they are:

1. How does the welfare state system effectively contribute to the long-term integration of immigrant refugees?
2. How does the factor human capital impact the integration of immigration refugees in the labour market?
3. To what extent does social integration through social capital facilitate the access of immigrant refugees to the labour market?

This chapter is built on the themes and sub-themes selected during the thematic analysis, among others, welfare state system (refugees' under the Introduction Program and the post-introduction program phase), refugees' human capital (language proficiency, refugees' education background, approval of school documents for refugees in Norway, and education

acquired in Norwegian as a *sine qua non*), refugees' social integration (establishing social network, the socio-cultural effects on integration, refugees integration in the labour market, mainstream discourse on integration, and public strategies on integration).

4.2 Welfare State System

To speak of the integration of immigrant refugees in a country like Norway is to allude in one way or another to its welfare state system which constitutes its ideological foundation. As I pointed out above (Chapter 2), it is a system built by collecting taxes from workers and income-generating activities, redistributing them to social services to deal with social problems, such as unemployment, education, etc. This redistribution also covers the reception of immigrant refugees, their resettlement, but also their support during and even after the reception program if necessary. The welfare state system is my first theme in this chapter. It is subdivided into two sub-themes: refugees under the introduction program and the Post-Introduction Program phase.

4.2.1 Refugees Under the Introduction Program

“Any adult immigrant refugee between the ages of 18 and 55 officially recognized by the Norwegian government as newly resettled in Norway in its various municipalities is eligible for the Introduction Program” (an employee in the Introduction Program or Intropro). Another public official informant added that, “the Introduction Program is a special offer for refugees to facilitate their very first integration process in Norway” (an employee in the Intropro). The refugees who participated in this research, although they were resettled in Norway and more specifically in the municipality of Kristiansand in different years, all testified to having followed the Introduction Program. As this refugee informant testified, “UNHCR brought me here [Kristiansand] in 2005, just two months after my resettlement, I started the Introduction Program” (a female Somalian refugee). “I arrived in Norway in 2016, first I was received in a reception center, a few months later I joined the Introduction Program in Kristiansand” (a male Eritrean refugee). While explaining what this program is for in relation to her experience, this refugee informant said:

When I came to Norway as a refugee in 2013, I went to the Introduction Programme here in Kristiansand. There are many things a newcomer in this country (Norway) does not know. This program helped me a lot at the beginning, as I was not yet stable, I did not know the place yet, I did not know the people yet, I did not know how to speak the

language yet, so this program gave me the opportunity to learn Norwegian and about the society (a female Congolese refugee)

The Introduction Program is a condensed training reputed to be favourable to the integration of refugees. According to one of my public official informants, “the Introduction Program has been designed to teach immigrant refugees several topics related to their new homeland Norway...these topics are as follows, the basics of Norwegian language and civic education” (an employee in the Intropro). In order to ensure successful integration, this public official informant added, stressing that “the purpose of the Introduction Program is to prepare the refugees to manage a quick and unproblematic integration and adaptation, so that they can become a part of the Norwegian society, by studying and finding work to get economic autonomy” (an employee in the Intropro). According to the appreciation of my refugee informants, the initiation program was beneficial to them. "I learned the language for free, which I would normally pay for”, insinuated a female Congolese refugee informant. Another refugee informant said, “for me, the thing I liked with the Introduction Program is that you are part of the society” (a male Somalian refugee).

The Introduction Program is an instance under the full responsibility of the Municipality. The latter mobilizes funds to meet the basic needs of the refugees while they follow this program in order to ensure their full involvement in the training. All my informants attested to having received financial support during the Introduction Program, and also added that it gave them courage and motivation, because they had nothing else to think about than to study. This was confirmed by this refugee informant who stated the following:

They were supporting us financially by giving us money to meet our needs while studying...this motivated me a lot because I had no excuse, such as, I do not have money to pay rent, or food, or transport, or other. (a male Burundian refugee)

The male informant refugee from Palestine supported the above quote by saying that; “the Introduction Program makes you to forget the economic part at that time in your life and you can focus on school...as for me it was like, I get enough money to live, I don’t need to get a job, I just have to focus on school”. This public official informant pointed out that “the intro program is considered a full-time job” (an employee in the Intropro). Therefore, refugees also pay taxes like any worker in Norway. This means that the payment of tax as a contribution to

the welfare state is ingrained in the memory of refugees from the moment they enter the programme, as this Eritrean refugee asserts; “The Introduction Program is like a job, you earn money by going to school and you pay taxes at the same time” (a female Eritrean refugee).

Identifying the education and work experience of refugees from their home countries prior to their arrival in Norway allows the Introduction Program to better guide them. “When they start this program, we have private appointments with each participant where he/she tells us about this/her past and what he/she plans to do in the future” (an employee in the intro). Therefore, the participants in the Introduction Program are divided into two groups. As pointed out by another public official informant in the introductory program, “we categorize the participants into two, those who choose the path of studies (often young and over-educated) and those who choose the path of work (often those of middle age or more or less educated), and each receives support to achieve this/her goal”. According to my public official informant, “those who choose the school path, as they are already adults (18 years and older), they take remedial courses in the Introduction Program before going to high school” (an employee in the Intropro). This was confirmed by this Palestinian refugee:

When I got positive, I moved to Kristiansand, where I started at a school for immigrants under the Introduction Program. We had most of the subjects that Norwegians have before they start the secondary school. We had mathematics, Norwegian, English, and science. (a male Palestinian refugee)

For those who choose the path of work, when they begin to understand the language a bit, the Introduction Program finds them places to practice. Among my refugee informants, those who followed the work path confirmed that they had practiced the language in local public or private companies. “I remember practicing the language in a kindergarten before deciding to continue my studies” (a male Burundian refugee). “As kindergarten was heavy for me because of my back, I was sent to the canteen to practice the language” (a female Congolese refugee). According to my Eritrean refugee informant, the class and practice time was well separated. “In the Introduction Program, we went three days at school and two days to the practice place” (a female Eritrean refugee). My public official informant pointed out that for those who choose the path of work, there are other goals behind language learning.

Participants who choose the path of work in the Introduction Program, we send them with other goals beyond language practice. It is another way to introduce them to Norwegian working life, but also to facilitate them getting in touch with potential employers. (an employee in the Intropro)

From their resettlement until the end of the program, the Municipality provides each refugee or each refugee family (for those who came with their family) with a contact person. These contact persons ensure the permanent follow-up of the refugees who are under their responsibility in the Introduction Program. They serve as a bridge between the municipality and the refugees. One of my public official informants attests this by saying, “in addition to home follow-ups such as paying bills, shopping, I follow the refugees under my responsibility at school or at the practice place to ensure that they understand what they relearn, and if it is difficult or the language complicates them, I try to explain them”. This was confirmed by all my refugee informants. For example, this male Congolese refugee informant said, “If there was something I did not understand at school or elsewhere, I would ask my contact person to explain it to me”. Another middle-aged Somali refugee female informant also added that, “My contact person in the Introduction Program was always available and helped me a lot”.

However, the objective of the Introduction Program (at the end of the program the participants are able either to continue with studies or to find a job) as indicated earlier in this chapter appears to be for some not too difficult and for others complicated, and even impossible. This makes the time granted to refugees in the Introduction Program subject to debate and discussion. From what I received from a public official informant in the reception program, in the general case the adaptation varies from one category to another:

For those who have at least 10 years of education before coming to Norway, it is better for them because they can read and write. It is not too complicated for them to learn something compared to those who have not been to school. Age and health also play an important role. It also depends on if you have a family, if you have children, all this reduces the concentration of the participants. So, I can say that it is enough for some but not for others (an employee in the Intropro).

This quote was corroborated by one of my male refugee informants from Burundi who arrived in Norway with his university degree in economics. “I left the Introduction Program early

because I found that this program was only very beneficial the first year” (a male Burundian refugee). Although those who came with a minimum of 10 years of education from their home country fared better than others in terms of integration into the Introduction Program, most of them feel that they were under pressure to finish the program earlier, regardless of their language level or their adaptation to society. This informant refugee young man from Palestinian origin who had completed high school in his home country, while complaining about having done less than two years in the Introduction Program, told me the following, “when they think you are a little smarter than the others, they do not care about you... it was like they kicked me out of the Introduction Program, even though I was not yet ready in terms of the language to start high school. I did not even do two years in this program”.

“The Introduction Program, although still limited in time (2 years to 3 years maximum), has implemented a new law increasing by one more year for those who want to study and finish secondary school within 4 years” (an employee in the Intropro). A measure considered favorable to the integration of participants by encouraging them in the acquisition of human capital as key to access job. However, although the time is increased for those who want to complete secondary school characterized by young and educated refugees, those who have chosen the path of work mainly composed of less educated and middle-aged people, remain in the limit of 2 to 3 years and yet more vulnerable in terms of integration. This middle-aged (around 50) Somalian female refugee informant who arrived uneducated in Norway said, "what I did not like about the Introduction Program was that I was not yet at the level I wanted on the language to integrate well and access the job, I wished to learn more but unfortunately, they told me that I had to stop...I had the impression that we were under pressure to finish quickly, regardless of our language level...the time was really not enough for me". One of my public official informants also expressed dissatisfaction with the integration of some participants at the end of the Introduction Program. According to her, there are those who need a little more time.

I am not really satisfied with the integration of immigrant refugees at the end of the Introduction Program in the Municipality of Kristiansand. I feel like when they are finished with us, we just let them go and it is not easy, most of them do not want to go to NAV. It is like they want to be in the Introduction Program a little more time, some of them really need more time. I am not satisfied, and the NAV system is like it is not

the system they are used to. In the Introduction Program we are a little bit flexible, but the other system is stricter. (an employee in the Intropro)

4.2.2 Post-Introduction Program Phase

The Post-Introduction Program phase constitutes the interest of this study. It is an unlimited phase in terms of time and very complex for immigrant refugees. When refugees enter this phase, they are expected to acquire basic integration skills to enable them to function normally in society like any Norwegian or other integrated immigrant. Like, for instance, finding a job and/or pursuing studies. However, after the Introduction Program, it turns out that the refugees still face various challenges. This was certified by my public official informant who pointed out the following:

The Introduction Program, as the name suggests, is just an introduction to the integration process of refugees in Norway. The challenge is that after this program the refugees still do not have enough language, not enough education, not enough Norwegian network, not enough resources, not enough cultural understanding, and not enough knowledge about the Norwegian system. (an employer in the Intropro)

As right after the Introduction Program, refugees still face several challenges in terms of integration, all receive support from the welfare state system but in different ways depending on the path taken by each participant. All my informants attested to having received financial support to achieve their objectives in the Post-Introduction Program phase. “After the Introduction Program, as I could no longer benefit from their [Introduction Program] support, my contact person helped me to apply to study loan [Lånekassa]... that is how I was able to continue my secondary education, and even now that I am in university, I continue to benefit from this study loan” (a male Palestinian refugee). A female refugee informant from Somalia said, “since I completed the Introduction Program, as I did not get the job, I am doing practices and other training with the support of NAV”.

For those who do not achieve the objectives previously set in the Introduction Program, which are to continue their studies and/or find a job, the Municipality finds other formulas to help them to better integrate and become autonomous. As the Introduction Program is a time-limited program, and refugees who do not achieve any of these objectives can no longer have access,

according to this public official informant, “the Municipality organizes itself through another program called Outro through NAV...NAV which is simply a sub-directorate of the municipality, which deals with social issues” (an employee in the Outro Program or Outropro). To find out what this Outro Program is, the same public official informant replied this:

After the Introduction Program if refugees do not get a job or to go to school, they come to Outro/NAV. Outro finds for them different activities or different ways so that they can get a job or continue with school at the end of the Outro Program. If it is not possible, we send them to social assistance. The Outro is like the Introduction Program, it is one to two years, but they have to go to practice in different places and combine it with school or other activities. We just take care of participants who are done with the Introduction Program (an employee in the Outro Program).

Among my refugee informants, all those who chose the path of work in the Introduction Program unfortunately did not find a job after this program and all went to NAV in the Outro Program. For instance, this Somalian female refugee informant who noted that, “since I finished the Integration Program, as I did not find a job, NAV takes care of me, and I do practices and other training at the same time”. The other female refugee informant from the Congo affirmed this, telling that, “after the Introduction Program, as I could not find a job and my Norwegian was still weak, I continued under the municipality with another short program [Kvalifisering], which is a mixed program with three days of practice and two days of schools... but after this program, if you cannot find a job, NAV places you in the social. As this last informant pointed out, the very last solution for those who cannot fit in is to be sent to social”.

However, none of my refugee informants wanted to be placed in social assistance at NAV. First, because they have chosen the path of work, they are motivated and want to achieve their goals by finding employment and working independently. But even though the support in the Outro Program is reduced compared to what they received in the Introduction Program and the fact that they find themselves in financial difficulty, they continue to hope and fight to find a job. One of my refugee informants said that:

My economy was not good because after my two years in the Introduction Program, I should go to NAV, and you do not get enough there. In the Introduction Program you earn more money than when it ends. The money you get under the Introduction Program

is enough and stable, but after this program, it is an unstable time. When you go to NAV, you have to print out many papers, fill out a lot of forms, send your bank statement, and so forth. Therefore, I can say that receiving support from NAV is not desirable, people have to study or go to practice places to find jobs. (a female Eritrean refugee)

This question of financial difficulty after the Introduction Program also affected the majority of my informants who chose the path of studies, as this young Congolese male refugee informant attested, “my income was reduced from 13000kr to 8000kr, when I finished the Introduction Program and applied for a student loan, tried to find a job next to school but it was not possible”. However, although the majority of my refugee student informants had no luck finding student jobs, a small number told me that they had worked while pursuing their studies. They assured me that they had enough money to live, as beyond the student loans they received, they also had their monthly salary. This young Palestinian refugee who is now studying at university, while considering himself one of the lucky refugees to have found a job during his studies, said a follower:

I was lucky, I got a job in a shop only four months after the Introduction Program...but what about others? (a male Palestinian refugee)

4.3 Refugees' Human Capital

Human capital is a major pillar for the integration of refugees in the municipality of Kristiansand. As is very clear from the previous point, refugee integration activities in the Introduction Program and even afterwards in the Outro Program revolve around education and skills acquisition. Immigrant refugees all benefit from the support of the welfare state system to achieve their goals. It is about making refugees more productive in the labour market so that they not only become self-sufficient, but also contributors to the welfare state through their taxes. The human capital of refugees is a theme that emerged from four sub-themes during the analysis of my empirical data, these are among others; language proficiency, refugees' education background, approval of school documents for refugees in Norway, and education acquired in Norway as a *sine qua non*. All of these sub-themes will be discussed in detail in this point.

4.3.1. Language Proficiency

“In Norway it is language first”, a male refugee informant from Syria said. “You cannot do anything here without the language”, he added to support his point. Once the refugees are resettled in the municipality, their integration process begins first with the acquisition of human capital through learning the Norwegian language. Language is the engine of all social, economic, political, or administrative activity in the country in general and in the municipality of Kristiansand in particular. All my informants without exception, whether refugees or public officials, considered language to be the first challenge refugees face when integrating into Norwegian society, and more often when trying to enter the market. One of my informants’ public officials under the Introduction Program affirmed this by saying, “when you do not know the language, you do not integrate at all here [in Norway], because you cannot function in the workplace and everywhere”. This was supported by all the other informants, like this Congolese refugee who, from his experience, told me this, “language is the main obstacle that prevents immigrant refugees from finding a job” (a male Congolese refugee).

Learning the Norwegian language seems to be difficult for refugees, not only in the Introduction Program, but also in the Post-Introduction Program phase when refugees want to access opportunities such as education or employment. One of my refugee informants said, “since I arrived here [Kristiansand] and even now, language still constitutes a biggest challenge for me...everything comes after language here in Norway” (a female Eritrean refugee). The stages of language learning follow a national criterion which my public official informant in the Introduction Program explained as follows, “A0 to A1 is for new beginners, when they reach level A2 then they can start communicate, at B1 the participant already has an advanced level to face big challenges like studies and work, at B2, the participant has a mature level”. However, reaching any of these levels depends on each participant's ability and/or goal.

The purpose of language learning is to be able to communicate, study and work. Since language is a key element that facilitates social interactions, it allows immigrant refugees to better integrate into their new society. However, the category of those who arrived in Norway at a middle age (and above) and/or with a low level of education, or even illiterate, have difficulties in mastering the language. “Among them there are those who don't know how to learn the language at all”, as explained by my informant, who works as a contact person at the Municipality. This makes their integration complicated in terms of access to employment. A

public official informant in the Introduction Program said the following in relation to this category, “beyond advanced age and health problems, refugees who have not been to school and who have to learn to read and write, it is really complicated for them to learn the language compared to others”. This female Congolese refugee informant also attested this based on her experience, “the Norwegian language is very complicated, especially for us who came here [Norway] at an advanced age, it limits our chances of being hired... they want young people and good language skills”.

However, although the category of less educated and of middle aged have enormous difficulties in mastering the [Norwegian] language, those who arrived here [Norway] young and educated also face some language challenges when integrating into the society in general and especially into the labour market. During my interview with a female refugee informant of Eritrean origin, she told me, “I am worried about my Norwegian level, I speak well but sometimes I wonder if it is good enough, it makes me lose confidence”. This makes refugees reluctant to speak, it also reduces self-confidence when they are called for a job interview, with the consequence of minimizing their chances of accessing a job. Frustrating for this, a male refugee informant from Somalia said, “I am always scared when I think about my level of Norwegian and I have to go to a job interview”. Refugees who have level B1 and even B2, mature in the Norwegian language also in some cases face challenges not only when they want to access jobs but also when they are in work. This was attested by an informant who, after the Introduction Program, has worked for almost 15 years in the transport sector in the municipality of Kristiansand, he said as follow:

The language is very relevant and constitutes the biggest challenge here [Norway], and this is not only for refugees who are not good in Norwegian. I remember in the job, sometimes my colleagues made the language difficult, they talked in dialect to prevent me from listening to what they were saying, and I was completely lost. (a male Syrian refugee)

The Norwegian language is influenced by certain ethnic communities and even by certain regions. For example, the way of speaking of those who live in Kristiansand is different from those who live in Trondheim or even in Oslo and elsewhere. Although it is the same language, Norwegian is spoken in different dialects. Thus, the pronunciation and/or the use of certain words which are not in official Bokmål seem complicated for the immigrant refugees. A barrier

even for refugees who already have a good level of Norwegian, as happened to the Syrian refugee informant quoted above. Another refugee informant from Eritrea also pointed out that, “some companies have started to favour [Nynorsk] or [New Norwegian] to the detriment of [Bokmål] which is officially used. She said, “it happened to me once at the interview and I missed the chance to be hired and yet I met the criteria” (a female Eritrean refugee). This further complicates the integration of refugees in access to employment.

4.3.2. Refugees’ Education Background

Most non-Western countries are characterized by poverty, a large part of the population does not study at all or does not complete their studies. Access to education is a luxury needed for the majority of the population in most non-Western countries. As this refugee informant said: “When my father died, I could not continue studying, I was in primary school... it was not easy for my mother to pay for me school fees, that is why I quit...life changed...I was too small, but I had no choice but to help my mother to sell small items to survive” (a female Congolese refugee). This observation was made through my all 14 immigrant refugee informants, two of them did not go to school in their countries of origin (illiterate), three did not complete primary school, five started secondary school but did not complete it, two finished secondary school and only two finished university.

Beyond poverty, the majority of my refugee informants told me about the destabilization of their education due to war, insecurity, and other atrocities, which even forced them to flee their respective countries. As this male refugee informant from Somalia attested, “in my country, I did not finish my secondary studies because of the war, and I was not lucky to continue my studies in the transit country [Kenya], until that I arrived here in Norway”. When refugees flee their country of origin, most of them go to camps in transit countries before being resettled in Western countries, such as Norway or others, to ensure their protection. This refugee informant also reported the following:

In Congo I studied up to form four in secondary school, then I stopped when the war started, we flew to Uganda in the refugee camp...there I tried to continue my secondary school, but I stopped again, as I should take care of my family. I started doing some business, up to when I came to Norway. (a male Congolese refugee)

When refugees flee to transit countries, they generally lose everything. Some parents who may have had little means find themselves stuck. Poverty and other difficult living conditions prevent them from sending their children to school. Some children have no choice but to stay at home and continuing their studies becomes impossible. However, other parents manage to find jobs or other businesses and manage to send their children to school. This allows some refugees to complete their secondary or even university studies in the transit countries, before being resettled in the host countries. As this informant of Syrian origin who lived for many years in the transit country [Turkey] said:

I am from Syria, but almost all my young age, I lived in a foreign country [Turkey], my father was kicked out of Syria by politicians...I started my primary school in Syria, then I went to continue and finish my secondary education in Turkey, before moving to Norway. (a male Syrian refugee)

The education acquired in the countries of origin or transit positively favours the integration of immigrant refugees in the host countries, in terms of access to opportunities such as the acquisition of human capital and to the labour market. With deep regret, one of my informants, a Somalian refugee who arrived in Norway without education, said, “I did not study in my country of origin for lack of means, and since I cannot read or write, it's hard to find a job” (a female Somalian refugee). On the other hand, this other refugee informant who even managed to finish his university studies in her country of origin before fleeing the war, said, “I come from my country [Burundi] with a baccalaureate in economics, that helped me a lot to integrate here [Norway], because it was easy for me to understand the system and to take initiatives like going to school and looking for a job” (a male Burundian refugee).

The education acquired in their country of origin is an important factor that allows them [immigrant refugees] to adapt quickly to our [Norwegian] educational system, I personally see through our participants during and even after the Introduction Program...those who have come with a high level of education they do not need much help from us, they manage to search jobs for themselves. (an employee in the Intropro)

However, while the education acquired by refugees in their country of origin facilitates their integration in terms of acquiring human capital and understanding the system of the host country, it does not guarantee them relevant jobs. According to the experience of the official

informant in the Introduction Program quote above, “Refugees who come with a higher education find it difficult to enter the labour market using their diplomas from their countries of origin”. An assertion that she justified in the following way:

For those who come with higher education, employers say; we do not have place. They question their education from their countries of origin before even trying them, they think it is not enough” (an employee in the Intropro).

4.3.3 Approval of School Documents for Refugees in Norway

Since non-Western refugees mostly arrive without higher education, this question of approval of educational documents in Norway mainly concerns only highly educated refugees. As I pointed out above, among my 14 refugee informants, only 2 studied in their country of origin until obtaining their university degree. However, for these highly educated refugees, finding a relevant job in Norway with their diplomas acquired in their country of origin before their approval is an impossible equation, and constitutes a barrier to their integration. This was affirmed by a female Eritrean refugee informant, “when I arrived in Norway, I had a bachelor's degree in business and administration, I applied for maybe a hundred jobs, but no positive response”. Another male refugee informant from Burundi who came with his degree in economics, pointed out that, “I found small jobs, and not in my field”. A barrier that prevents many highly educated refugees, especially non-Westerns, from accessing relevant job opportunities in Norway. As this public official informant also attested as follow:

Non-western refugees do not have access to the labour market with their education from their country, they are not accepted, especially when they are not approved. For those who arrived with a bachelor's degree or more, they must collect and send their papers to NOKUT for accreditation, in case of a positive response they are allowed to apply for other programs at the university. (an employer in the Intropro)

The approval of school documents for immigrants in general, and in particular for non-Western refugees acquired from their country of origin, is an essential process in Norway. A process that must be followed by those who came with their university diplomas, and who are interested either in using these approved school documents to find a job directly, or in continuing their studies. During the Introduction Program, educated participants who wish to have their school

documents approved received assistance from their contact persons or other employees in this program. As noted by this public official informant, “we ask them for all their papers and send them first for translation, then after we sit down together and apply for approval to NOKUT” (a contact person in the Municipality). However, all my informants whom I interviewed on this subject all admitted that the approval of educational documents for immigrant refugees is a long and very demanding process which often demotivates some participants. My refugee female informant from Eritrean said, “the process of approving my school documents took me an entire year”. This public official informant mentioned that:

For instance, someone who has been a teacher in his/her country and wants to continue with the same job in Norway, must have his/her papers approved by NOKUT, which is a long process. This leads them to either restart their studies at university or to give up and choose something simple to quickly find a job, which is not easy to get either. (an employee in the Intropro)

This demotivates most overeducated refugees from their original goals when they arrive in Norway. The male refugee informant from Burundian reported that, “I had to choose another option [psychiatric studies] which seemed easy to me to access the labour market... and yet, initially, I wanted to continue my studies by following the master's program”. However, if some persist until obtaining the approval of their academic documents acquired in their country of origin, this does not always guarantee them access to employment. This female Eritrean refugee informant said, “I got approval from NOKUT, but it did not help me to get a job”. Even my public official informants in the Introduction Program were aware of the non-recruitment of overeducated refugee immigrants despite having their school documents approved. One of them (employee in the Intropro) stated as follows:

Still after getting approval from NOKUT, they are not accepted in the labour market. Maybe some very few cases. But in general, they do not get jobs, they need to study more to be qualified in the host country [Norway] to access the labour market. It is like they are sceptical about non-European education. (an employee in the Intropro)

4.3.4 Education Acquired in Norwegian as a sine qua non

As well mentioned in the chapter above (Chapter 2), in Norway, studying is both a right and an obligation. All my refugee informants without exception showed me through their own experiences the relevance of studying until obtaining at least a high school diploma in Norway, as a condition without which integration into the labour market is complicated. My female Eritrean refugee informant who after the Induction Program went to study health care and even graduated from high school assured me that “finishing high school helped me enter the labour market, because in Norway you don't get a job without an education”. However, this is not the case for those who arrived in Norway with an extremely low level of education and even middle-aged, and for whom further education is not at all easy. This category is often the one that takes its way to work in the Introduction Program. My refugee informant of this category, who therefore could not access the secondary level in Norway, testified that:

Although I was taught in the Introduction Program to work in the canteen as a cook, it is difficult for me to find a job...wherever I go to practice with the hope of being retained, when the employers want to hire, they take those with cooking degrees even though they came after me. They ignore me. This has happened to me several times, it is sad (a female Somalian refugee)

As is very clear from the statements quoted above, studying until obtaining a diploma in Norway gives the refugee a certain assurance not only of access to the labour market but also and above all of obtaining a stable and relevant job. This was also underlined by this female Congolese refugee informant who could not find a stable job until he decided to pursue studies in the field of construction and obtain his diploma. “I changed jobs several times, until I understood that I had to study and get my paper...what helped me to get my current job was education. When I finished my studies, I started as a substitute for a few months and then they hired me as a full-time employee”.

Studying in Norway is not only for refugee immigrants who arrived with a low level of education, it is the same for overeducated. Although they are not considered to have the same degree of vulnerability as less educated refugees in terms of access to the Norwegian labour market, highly educated refugees from their home country also face significant challenges when they are looking for jobs here [Norway]. All my informants, highly educated refugees from

their home country, testified that they encountered several obstacles when trying to enter the Norwegian labour market. This pushed them all either to resume their university studies in another field, or to continue their studies, but this time at master's level for those whose academic documents from countries of origin have been approved. All therefore had no choice but to continue their studies in Norway in order to be able to enter the labour market. One of my overeducated refugee informants from Burundi who chose to restart in another field said, "those who are under pressure to study here [in Norway] are us... it is difficult for us to make career in any job, it's very humiliating...it pushed me, despite my level of education from my country of origin, to take psychiatric studies" (a male refugee from Burundi). The Eritrean refugee informant who despite the approval of her school documents decided to pursue studies in Norway to access employment, certified the following:

After getting approval from NOKUT, as my wish was to access the labour market with my school papers from my country of origin as soon as possible, I tried to apply for jobs again, but without success, until I decided to continue my studies. That is how I signed up for the master's program at the University of Agder here in Kristiansand...despite all this, it took me a while to find relevant work (a female Eritrean refugee)

However, although studying in Norway facilitates the integration of refugees into the Norwegian labour market, some highly qualified refugees from their home countries who take the initiative to continue their studies here [Norway] and complete them do not find relevant jobs. Despite the efforts made to closely follow the whole process of accrediting their foreign school documents to NOKUT, and even continuing their education by taking the master's program or similar, proves unsuccessful for some. A barrier that pushes some of them to choose to stay at home without doing anything while waiting for social assistance. Others seek jobs for which they are either overqualified or unqualified, just to ensure their survival and that of their families for those who are married. This has been certified by one of my public official informants:

Although it takes time, most of those who decide to go to school and finish, it works. Most of them get jobs. I know many personally. But there are also a lot who after all these challenges, they finish and still not get jobs. I had a case of a non-European immigrant refugee who is a flight mechanic, after searching without success for a practice place at the airport, he decided to take a master's program in mechatronics at

university and finished it, but still does not have a job. It is not really a guarantee. And as he tried to find a job in this field for many years but without success, he decided to just sit home and wait for social assistance. (an employee in the Intropro)

4.4 Refugees' Social Integration

Refugees' access to the labour market through social integration was one of the most interesting themes during my thematic analysis. All my informants reported that several obstacles to social integration also prevent them from entering the labour market in the municipality of Kristiansand. Social integration according to them [my informants] is much more complex after the Introduction Program, where refugees are expected to lead a fulfilling life like any Norwegian or other integrated immigrant. Strengthening social capital by establishing social networks is therefore essential as it allows refugees to better integrate by accessing the labour market. Refugees' social integration constitutes my third and last theme. It includes five sub-themes, among others: establishing social network, the socio-cultural effects on integration, Refugees integration in the labour market, mainstream discourse on integration, and public policies on integration.

4.4.1 Establishing Social Network

Although it is not easy to establish according to the statements of all my informants, social capital through the social network plays a very crucial role in the municipality of Kristiansand. "It is thanks to your network that you get almost everything," declared a female refugee informant of Eritrean origin. Another public official informant said, "all the opportunities are hidden in the establishment of social networks in Kristiansand". The social network is a central concept not only in the integration of refugees into Norwegian society, but also and above all in their access to opportunities, such as finding a job. This male informant refugee from Syria attested that, "if you need a job here [Kristiansand], you have to find friends and establish your network". Building a social network to find a job is therefore essential in Norway and more particularly in Kristiansand.

The social network between immigrant refugees, although they are of different origins, is not complicated to establish. Most of them come into contact in the introduction program where they interact with each other during the course and other activities. As the male refugee informant from Burundi attested, "the Introduction Program brought me into contact with other

refugees of different nationalities, and we became friends”. However, this friendship between immigrant refugees, although crucial in terms of integration in general, is limited when it comes to accessing job opportunities. This female Congolese refugee informant said as follows about her network with immigrants from her country of origin, “in Kristiansand there are several Congolese now and we almost all know each other, but that does not change my situation as an unemployed person”. “We have a church here [Kristiansand] built by my community, and I have a lot of friends, I know that if those who work among them had the opportunity to connect me in a job, they would have already done so (a male Eritrean refugee). This refugee who, after the integration program, got his first job thanks to his Syrian friend, but is now struggling to find a relevant job, said:

The job I do in the restaurant, I got it through a refugee immigrant friend like me with whom I was studying. One day he asked me if I was interested in working in a restaurant and I accepted. A few days later he introduced me to his boss and that is how I got this job...it is a part-time contract. As I finished my studies in “sales and service”, I am looking for a job that corresponds with what I studied...but I have not found it yet...I continue to work in this restaurant because I have no choice. (a male Eritrean refugee)

To increase the chances of finding work, all my immigrant refugee informants expressed the need to seek at all costs to establish a social network with native Norwegians. However, according to my Burundian male refugee informant, “native Norwegians do not trust immigrant refugees, and when there is a lack of trust, they become skeptical and finding work becomes difficult”. Yet one of my public official informants in the municipality said, “jobs in Kristiansand are mostly handled by ethnic Norwegians” (an employee of the outro program). This gives immigrants no choice but to make efforts to find native Norwegians in order to access job opportunities. Convinced of the impact of the social network with ethnic Norwegians in the municipality of Kristiansand, this public official informant said, “Kristiansand is a small town, people [native Norwegians] know each other...the people who are going to be your reference are known by employers, or they know the names” (an employee in the intro). Also, as part of establishing the social network with the Norwegians, my Palestinian informant added the following:

Native Norwegians compared to immigrant refugees have more opportunity because they have the network for generations, “they know someone who knows someone who

knows someone, etc”. Unfortunately, many immigrant refugees here [Kristiansand] struggle to establish a potential network that can facilitate their access to job opportunities. Many say in Kristiansand, if you don’t know someone, it is impossible for you to get a job and it is true. No matter your degree or other level of education, you need people to get you there. I know many cases of immigrant refugees who did not get the opportunities they deserved just because of lack of network. After sending their CVs, employers never contact them. As per my experience, in most cases you need to know somebody to get at least an interview and especially native Norwegians. (a male Palestinian refugee)

However, establishing a social network with native Norwegians is not easy for refugee immigrants. A refugee informant said that, “I found it very difficult here [Kristiansand] to find Norwegian [native] friends, especially if they do not know you” (a male Congolese refugee). Another male refugee informant from Somalia added, “Norwegians are not easily accessible, at first, they seem a bit shy, but after that it is okay...you always have to try, it is important here [Kristiansand]”. My informant public official in the Municipality also mentioned the linguistic challenge, "difficult communication due to insufficient mastery of the language, which causes uncertainty and shame that prevents them [refugees] from daring to communicate" (an employee in the Intropro). This female Eritrean refugee informant pointed the age factor. According to her, young refugees are more successful in establishing network with native Norwegians than middle-aged refugees. She stated the following, comparing herself to her mother:

We arrived here [Kristiansand] when I was 17. A year later, I joined the Introduction Program. Since I was too young, it was not too difficult for me to find Norwegian friends and integrate, compared to my mother. Sometimes I feel sorry for her because she does not work, she is often alone at home. How will such a person integrate? (a female Eritrean refugee).

Another Somalian refugee informant who arrived in Kristiansand in middle age and has lived here for several years said, “It is hard for me to find native Norwegian friends, I do not have enough... I try but I cannot, it is not easy, and yet I have lived here [Kristiansand] for more than 15 years. I even think that is the reason why I never found a job” (a female Somalian refugee). My refugee informants therefore argued that this difficulty in establishing the social

network between immigrant refugees and native Norwegians is an obstacle that constitutes a barrier to their integration into mainstream society and thus job opportunities.

4.4.2 Socio-Cultural Effects on Integration

“Kristiansand is a municipality that welcomes many people [including refugees] from different backgrounds” (an employee in the Intropro). “I came to Kristiansand almost 20 years ago, there were not many immigrants like you can see now” (Syrian refugee). Kristiansand has been experiencing increasing diversity for a few decades now. Hence, the socio-cultural factor was pointed out by my refugee informants as one of the elements that has an important influence on their integration, especially after the Introduction Program where they begin to exploit the different opportunities for themselves in the municipality. This influence is perceptible according to them [my informants] not only in their integration into society in general but also in the labour market in the municipality of Kristiansand.

Considering diversity as a key element of rapprochement and socio-cultural adaptation, this male Burundian refugee informant attested to this by saying, “since my arrival here [Kristiansand], I have learned a lot from the Norwegians [natives], I think they also learn something from us”. Another female Eritrean refugee informant added, “we all have values to share”. Based on her experience, my public official informant who works as a contact person in the municipality said, “it has always been exciting to find out how other people live, I have already welcomed several refugees from different countries here [Kristiansand], and I have always had the same feeling” (a contact person in the municipality). This refugee informant from Eritrea who managed to get her first opportunity through practice after her university studies also said the following:

When I got my first practice in one voluntary organization here [Kristiansand], I went myself with my CV, then the chief called me for a short interview in his office, and while talking we found some common points. He has been to many African countries, and Ethiopia where I grew up because of political instability in my country [Eritrea] was one of them. We started talking about food and other Ethiopian traditions that he experienced there, and I got the place same day. When I started applying for jobs, I asked him to be my reference and, everywhere I applied it was easy because he was well known by many. (a female Eritrean refugee)

However, the socio-cultural factor also has, according to my informants, negative effects which hinder their integration process into the Municipality of Kristiansand, and which consequently disadvantage their access to employment and other opportunities. Most of my refugee respondents expressed difficulty in approaching native Norwegians to maximize their possibility for integration. One refugee informant noted that “you can have a neighbor and never greet each other like it was in my country...In my mother tongue we say, a neighbor is like a parent...I find that it reduces my freedom and my development, but it is their culture, we cannot do anything about it” (a female Congolese refugee). Another male refugee informant from Syria also added saying, “you want to be integrated but how is it possible with someone who never talks to you despite the effort you make to greet him/her? ”.

Native Norwegians are used to living in closed social circles. A public official informant who works in the Introduction Program confirmed this based on her experience in England, “this is linked to the culture, Norwegians are very cold, if you go to England, people speak very much, you just meet someone and say “Hello, how are you”, while Norwegians just smile, it might be seen like they are a bit shy...and this might be considered as a barrier for integration”. A feeling of loneliness and exclusion that refugee immigrants and especially middle-aged people develop and that makes their integration more difficult in terms of access to employment opportunities. This female Congolese refugee informant insinuated that, “this lonely life here [Kristiansand], has made me a victim of blood pressure...it has reduced my ability to work, my strength is not what it used to be. Unfortunately, that is the way of life Norwegians are used to, nothing to do”.

Another Congolese male informant said that the Norwegian culture of reluctance towards immigrants discourages and prevents their integration. “Norwegians are cold, this discourages immigrant refugees a lot...integration cannot succeed without their involvement” (male refugee from Congo). A male refugee informant from Burundi also mentioned the limitation of integration into Norwegian society due to religion and culture. He explained himself by taking the example of the challenges of certain refugees to participate in activities initiated by voluntary organizations due to their religious and/or cultural beliefs. This research supports that participation in social activities has an important impact in the establishment of the social network, which therefore facilitates refugees' access to employment and other advantages in the municipality.

There are many refugees who do not wish to participate in those voluntary organizations, just because of religion or culture. For example, there at Louis Michel, there is a cross, many Muslims cannot participate just because of that, or there are other cultures where women and men cannot sit in the same room and who can also have difficulties to participate and build their networks. (a male Burundian refugee)

According to the refugee informant from Palestine, it takes time for Norwegians to open up to others, especially immigrants. “Norwegians are interested in knowing things about us, I noticed where I work... except they are skeptical at first. They like to observe first, we are different” (a male refugee from Palestine). However, based on his experience, one of my informants who works in the Introduction Program pointed to employer skepticism due to culture as a barrier that reduces job opportunities for non-Western refugee immigrants compared to Western immigrants and native Norwegians. She said the following:

Employment opportunities are not the same for non-Western refugee immigrants, EU immigrants and native Norwegians. I think it is a matter of culture, employers are a bit skeptical about hiring someone they do not know or understand the culture. It is easier to hire a German or a Pole because the culture is a bit close to that of the Norwegian, even if they do not master the language... But if it is someone from the Middle East or Africa, the culture is totally different, maybe it can be difficult to trust them directly. (an employee in the Intropro)

4.4.3 Refugees Integration in the Labour Market

As one of my public official informants who work in the Introduction Program attested above, “access to employment for refugees is one of the main objectives of the Introduction Program”. All my informants who participated in this research underlined that access to employment is a crucial factor that promotes the integration of immigrant refugees in the municipality of Kristiansand. The male Syrian refugee informant said, “work is all we need here [Kristiansand] to integrate better”. The male Somalian refugee informant also noted that, “refugees who do not work do not integrate”.

However, the labour market in the municipality of Kristiansand was criticized by the majority of my refugee informants as being difficult to access. “What is difficult for me to live in

Kristiansand is to find a job” (a male Eritrean refugee). “Jobs are difficult to find here in Norway and especially in Kristiansand” (a male Congolese refugee). This difficulty in accessing jobs, according to my Eritrean refugee informant, is much more evident among immigrant refugees. “I think that there are not a lot of jobs in Kristiansand and that there are a lot to hire, it reduces the chances of refugee immigrants” (a female refugee from Eritrea). Although the number of immigrant refugees has increased, which could work to their advantage in terms of expanding their network, finding work in Kristiansand still seems difficult. This male refugee informant from Syria confirmed this by saying, “it is very difficult to find work in Kristiansand, but I think it is better now than before, because now there are a lot of immigrants in the city, and you can find it through them. But it is still not easy because many of them are also unemployed”. My Burundian refugee informant reported from his experience that job opportunities have diminished compared to his arrival in Kristiansand some 20 years ago and that refugee immigrants are the most vulnerable, said the following:

The most difficult thing here is to find a job, you can do your best to master the language but after having work becomes a problem. When we came here almost 20 years ago, just after the Introduction Program and even during the Introduction Program, it was easy to get even a small job but now things have changed for refugees. When you apply, they say, yes you have the language, but it is not enough to get a job, you need a diploma in something (Fagbrev), this means you have to go back to school and study for two years or more, depending on what you want to be and even thought to get job is still difficult. Times have changed, opportunities have become uncertain, and integration has become difficult. (a male Burundian refugee)

As I continued to dig deeper into my empirical data on labour market integration of refugees in Kristiansand Municipality during my thematic analysis, I noticed that a considerable number of my informants expressed a desire to move to bigger cities than Kristiansand. They believed that moving to cities like Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim, or Stavanger could allow them to maximize their chances of employment and facilitate their integration in Norway. The male Syrian refugee informant attested this, “it turns out to be easier to find a job in a big city than in a small town... I think it is difficult to find work in Kristiansand because it is not a big city like Oslo, Bergen, or Trondheim...there is a lack of jobs here [Kristiansand] and that makes life difficult, especially for immigrant refugees”.

Compared to bigger cities in the country, in Kristiansand almost all commercial and administrative activities are controlled by native Norwegians. My Syrian male refugee informant confirmed this by saying, “it is not easy for immigrant refugees to find a job, compared to Oslo or other big cities in Norway, almost all works are owned or run by Norwegians in Kristiansand”. This makes me to go back to the quote above, of one of my public official informants who works in the Introduction Program, she also pointed out that, “the labour market in Kristiansand is strongly indigenous-dominated”. Hence, the skepticism of employers towards immigrant refugees, as I have underlined above, disadvantages their possibilities of access to employment in the Municipality.

Other refugee informants also told me about “foreign names” as another discriminatory factor that hinders the integration of many refugees into the labor market in Kristiansand. Something that pushes some refugees towards assimilation. Changing their foreign names to the detriment of Norwegian names gives them the hope of at least having access to the job interview if not to work. This was confirmed by a Palestinian male refugee informant who said, “When you apply for jobs with your original names, the chance is too low to be contacted, but once you change them to Norwegian, they call you for at least one interview, and that works for a lot of people in my experience”. This Syrian refugee informant indicated that changing foreign names to Norwegian names gives more access to relevant jobs:

The name is a huge barrier to many refugee immigrants looking for jobs here [Kristiansand], but not in all jobs. You can find a job, but the job native Norwegians do not want to do. Especially when they know it is hard or has a low salary, they leave it to the immigrant refugees. As for driving a taxi at night, if there are ten taxi drivers at night, only one or two of them can be native Norwegians. I share this example because I worked as a taxi driver for 15 years. All easy and well-paying jobs are for them [natives]. It is not that immigrant refugees do not have the right to do them, they have it, but access is not easy. I have a friend who has a high education and is very smart...One day I met him, I asked him how is life now? He said, I am planning to change my Arabic name to Norwegian, I have tried to apply everywhere but no success, one of my friends who tried this strategy is working already, he advised me to do it too. (a male Syrian refugee)

4.4.4 Mainstream Discourse on Integration

The mainstream discourse on integration was also addressed during the interviews. Refugees are afraid of what is said about them in the mainstream discourse on social media, in the media and other information channels. Most of my refugee informants touched on this point, showing that it also constitutes a serious obstacle to their integration not only into society in general but also and above all into the labour market. A danger which, according to my refugee informants, concerns not only adult refugees, but also their children. A female refugee informant from Somalia said, “One of my children who is in primary school once asked me, when are we going to return home to Somalia?”, a question that his friends asked him at school while playing. Those who prefer to continue their education go to regular schools where they study with native Norwegians. And there they directly or indirectly face different challenges of discrimination or exclusion. Based on her own experience, a Congolese female refugee informant said:

I was mobbed a lot. When I finished the Introduction Program where we were only immigrant refugees, I went to the secondary school where it was almost only Norwegian girls. Every time I came to class, no one wanted to sit with me. This tormented me much, it made me not feel free to be with others. Everything started to change when one day I braided a girl in the class, others started asking me to braid them too. Then they understood that I was not as bad as many of them claimed, I also discovered some good people with whom we have remained true friends until now. (a female Congolese refugee)

“For me to live in Norway, the most difficult thing is discrimination and racism, I arrived here for almost 20 years ago, it was not many foreigners in Kristiansand like now, this changed their mind” (a male Syrian refugee). Another Burundian male refugee informant mentioned, “what scares me are these laws which change all the time with the different parties and their ideologies and ambitions. We have no guarantees, a politician who does not care about refugee issues can be promoted and suffocate us”. Again, according to this Burundian male refugee informant, discriminatory discourse makes it difficult for refugees to integrate, as it makes employers sceptical and therefore prevents refugees from accessing employment.

What scares me is when I think about my future as an immigrant refugee and the prejudices and other debates that the media keep talking about. Sometimes, even before

the investigation, when something bad happens, they say it is the foreigners, then after they find out that they were wrong. Moreover, when a refugee behaves badly, they generalize and conclude that all refugees behave the same. This is not good for our children and can make even employers sceptical about hiring refugees or getting other opportunities. They will think everyone is the same, it is unfair. (a male Burundian refugee)

The granting of Norwegian citizenship was seen by some of my refugee informants as an important factor in their integration process, while others did not. “I think having Norwegian nationality will make it easier for me to find a relevant job” (Eritrean refugee). However, for my refugee female informant from Eritrea, having a Norwegian passport does not mean finding a job, “I am Norwegian, but I had my current job before I got citizenship, I do not believe this can solve the unemployment problem...I know several from my country who have it but still struggle to find a job”. This Congolese refugee informant who despite the Norwegian passport was the victim of exclusion stated the following:

I feel included but there is something that I do not like at all, for example when you get a Norwegian pass you are already Norwegian. One day we were traveling, and I already had a Norwegian pass even though I am an immigrant refugee, so a native Norwegian asked me, “Where are you from? ". I did not understand why she asked me this question and she saw me with a Norwegian pass. This makes immigrant refugees not feel included. (a female Congolese refugee)

4.4.4 Public Strategies on Integration

Despite the interest of this theme, in order not to be too long and to focus on the essentials in relation to my research, I have limited myself to this sub-theme on public strategies for the integration of refugees. My four public officials told me about the different strategies applied by the Municipality of Kristiansand to facilitate the integration of refugees into society in general and into the labour market in particular. These strategies include; language practices, professional practices and social activity. These strategies are developed according to these public informants, either by the Municipality itself through its institutions, or in collaboration with the churches, or voluntary organizations, or private companies of the Municipality. All my

refugee informants attested to having benefited from these municipal strategies in their integration process.

As far as language practice is concerned, most of my refugee informants testified that it helped them to improve their level of Norwegian. “Spending the whole day with preschool children helped me a lot to develop my vocabulary” (a male Burundian refugee). “This practice took away my fear of speaking Norwegian” (a male Syrian refugee). Although it is only a language practice, among my refugee informants, some said that they were not satisfied with their place of practice in relation to their background and their plans for the future. As this female Eritrean refugee informant pointed out, “they knew that I had a bachelor’s degree in financial management, I was surprised to be sent to a retirement home for my language practice”. One of the public official informants in the Introduction Program considered this as one of the challenges of this program and which therefore prevents the integration of refugees into the labour market. She used the example of the mechanic for whom she could not find a relevant place to practice even after studying here in Kristiansand.

One of the challenges of the Introduction Program is to find a relevant practice place for participants, especially those who have high education. Refugees that have high education and a lot of experience, it is difficult for us to get a practice place for them. I had a case of a flight engineer, and it was very difficult for me to get a practice place at Kjevik Airport in Kristiansand. It is not easy to get a relevant place for them, when it comes to boutiques, old people’s houses, kindergartens, and such places, it is very easy to get a practice place. (an employee in the Intropro)

In the Post-Introduction Program phase, when refugees acquire Norwegian human capital through education or other professional training, they begin to look for jobs. Those who cannot find a job or place of practice on their own, contact the NAV for help in their search. According to my public official informant in the Outro Program, “NAV via Outro does not give work to refugees, it appeals to employers according to the profile of the refugee [job seeker] within the framework of professional practice. If an employer has a place in his company, he/she takes him/her, if he/she is interested in his/her performance, he hires him/her” (an employee in the Outropro). Some of my informants attested that they got practice places through the Outro Program. “I finished my studies in health care, and now I am doing a little job that I got thanks to NAV. They contacted the company [retirement home] where I currently work. After a few

days, they called me and I started my practice, then I became a substitute” (a female Eritrean refugee).

However, among my refugee informants, there are those who have never worked since completing their training. “Since I finished my training in cooking 3 years ago, I have changed the practice places several times, but no one has hired me” (Congolese refugee). “I do not know if it is because of my age, I have been doing the practices for almost 15 years, I have never been hired”. (a female Somalian refugee). This challenge of not finding a job despite several practices prompted this female Somali refugee informant to ask the municipality for help. “What the municipality can do for us is to help us find jobs, after all these practices, it is almost impossible for us who are middle aged especially”. One of my male Congolese refugee informants suggested that “NAV follow-up would be needed at refugee practice places. According to him, after having found a place of practice for the refugees, the Municipality abandons them and the employers take advantage of it to abuse them, by exploiting them without hiring them”.

The municipality [NAV] has to be involved even after helping refugees to obtain the practice places. These practices are important but after more than 2 years they become less interesting. Moreover, I would say that employers abuse them by exploiting refugee immigrants without any desire to hire them one day. And so, they go from practice to practice for several years, with no hope of ever being hired. They should not be content to have people in their workforce to help them in their work but also and above all to think about hiring them. Unfortunately, they do not. They work 3 months or even a year then they change practice. (a male Congolese refugee)

Socio-cultural activities were also counted by my informants as public officials among the strategies that the Municipality applies to ensure the integration of refugees in Kristiansand. This strategy, which falls within the framework of diversity and inclusion, aims to give refugees the opportunity to expand their social network by finding potential friends but also to increase their level of Norwegian in order to integrate and find jobs. One of my public officials’ informants in the Introduction Program told me about a project in which she is working at Kirkens Bymisjon in Kristiansand as part of the expansion of the refugee network with native Norwegians, and which is funded by the municipality. “Beside my work in the Introduction Program, I have an extra-job in one of these voluntary organizations [at Kirkens Bymisjon] and

we have meetings with the municipality. The municipality gives money to these voluntary organizations to support their projects” (an employer in the Intropro).

All my informants attested to having participated in activities organized either by voluntary organizations or by churches in the Municipality. “I believe in voluntary activities, they have helped me a lot in my integration. I still participate even though I have lived here for almost 20 years. I am even a member of several” (a male Burundian refugee). “I have got Norwegian friends in these activities. There are a lot of these organizations in Kristiansand, we have Redkros, Blåkors, Kirkens Bymisjon, and others” (a female Eritrean refugee). However, although the initiative is good according to my refugee informants, some of them reported difficulties that prevent them from participating in these activities. This also constitutes an obstacle to their integration within the framework of widening their network in order to maximize the chances of finding a job. It's hard to go to the språkkafe, for example, who am I going to leave the children to? (a male Eritrean refugee). “We often meet the same people and pensioners, that is what demotivated me the most” (a male Congolese refugee). They assumed that if young active Norwegians got involved in these voluntary activities, it would be more interesting because, unlike pensioners, these young natives are still active and can put them in touch with job opportunities.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I covered the research questions elaborating on how the welfare state system effectively contributes to the long-term integration of immigrant refugees. On how the human capital factor impacts the integration of immigration refugees in the labour market. Lastly, to what extent does social integration through social capital facilitate the access of immigrant refugees to the labour market. I analytically discuss the difficulties and challenges highlighted by my informants in the previous chapter on empirical findings (Chap.4), migrant refugees face in their daily lives after the Introduction Program in the municipality of Kristiansand in Norway. This discussion focuses much more specifically on the main factors that limit their access to employment after the Introduction Program and thus hinder their integration into the Municipality. As this work is qualitative, I relied on the inductive approach to collect my empirical data. The latter allowed me, after thematic analysis, to retain my themes (Welfare State system on the integration of refugees, Human capital on the integration of refugees, and social integration of refugees) relevant to my findings and even for my theories. This chapter therefore confronts my empirical results with my theories in order to shed light on my research questions.

5.2 Welfare State System on the Integration of Refugees

The welfare state, as a fundamental pillar of Nordic countries, plays an important role in the integration of refugees (Brochmann & Hagelund, 2012). In Norway, this system aims to prevent the accumulation of well-being problems in society, while ensuring social protection for immigrants, in the same way as native populations (Tronstad, Nygaard, & Bask, 2018; Brochmann & Hagelund, 2012). To better address this issue, I referred to the research question which implied on the effectiveness of the welfare state system contributing to the long-term integration of immigrant refugees in the municipality of Kristiansand. I first relied on the theme of the welfare state system as a starting point. This theme suits better to the integration of refugees in Norway where the welfare state system is considered central. As the literature suggests, there is a close relationship between the welfare state system and refugee immigration, seen as mutually beneficial (Brochmann & Hagelund, 2012). This was confirmed by my empirical findings, refugees receive significant support in the municipality of Kristiansand to facilitate their integration in order to access employment and in turn become contributors to

general well-being through the payment of taxes. This care of refugees is done mainly within the framework of the Introduction Program and continues through other programs under NAV even after the Introduction Program if necessary.

In Nordic countries, the Introduction Program is a compulsory and necessary passage for newly resettled non-Western refugee immigrants in order to facilitate their integration process (Fernandes, 2015). This program in Norway serves to introduce refugees to active life in society. My empirical findings in agreement with the literature clearly show that the Introduction Program prepares participants in the Norwegian educational and professional system to become independent members of society (Hagelund, 2005). The Introduction Program is a clear illustration of the welfare state. Designed exclusively for refugees in Norwegian municipalities, this program has been described by Hagelund (2005) as having two components, namely financial and educational. My empirical findings suggest that the Municipality of Kristiansand mobilizes funds to meet the basic needs of refugees while they study (full-time) language, civic education, and other activities in the Introduction Program, to ensure their full involvement.

As the Introduction Program is a condensed remedial program for adult refugees to gain access to different opportunities in the municipality as quickly as possible, it divides its participants into two different categories based on their backgrounds and future goals. The category of those who choose the path of work, which is mainly composed of middle-aged and less educated refugees, and that of those who choose the path of education, mainly composed of young and educated refugees. The Introduction Program provides them with resources, contact persons and other supervisors to guide them in reaching their goals. This program is therefore an important springboard for refugees to better seize the opportunities of the Municipality in the Post-Introduction Program phase. Therefore, Bratsberg, Raaum and Røed (2016) conclude that during the integration program, participants should focus on the program and not seek to find jobs, as it can be short-lived and unstable in the future.

Djuve and Kavli (2018) argue that the Norwegian Introduction Program is an investment that the government places in refugees so that they first learn the necessary skills and then find work. My empirical findings indicate that to motivate participants to focus on skills acquisition in the Induction Program, a new refugee integration law was introduced. This law extends the duration of the Introduction Program for refugees to a maximum of four years, in order to enable

them to complete their secondary education. This new integration law, although important in the acquisition of human capital, only favours young and educated refugees who take the path of studies. And yet, according to my empirical findings, this category of young and educated refugees adapts better during and even after the Introduction Program compared to that of middle-aged and less educated refugees. Beyond their average age and their very low level of education, some of them have health problems, and most of them have family responsibilities. All of this reduces their focus on the program and makes it difficult for some to achieve the goals of the Induction Program in the allotted time and even impossible for others in this category.

As all the benefits of the Introduction Program are removed at the end of the program, most of the refugees who choose the path of work face financial difficulties, and finding work for them seems to be complicated despite the multiple practices and training done. However, although those who choose the path of education are more successful in acquiring education, finding relevant jobs seems difficult for many of them. (This point is much more discussed in the sub-themes below). And yet, finding a job in the Post-Introduction Program phase allows refugees not only to improve their financial situation but also to promote their integration. As well argued by Tronstad et al. (2018), participation in the labor market is a crucial element for integration.

The integration of refugees being the priority of the welfare state system even after the Introduction Program, the refugees who manage to continue their studies (often young and educated) apply for the loan and the scholarship. As for those who cannot study or find work (often middle-aged and the less educated refugees), they continue their training and professional practices after the Introduction Program under NAV (Outro). Since refugee integration programs in the Post-Introduction Program phase are also time-limited, if the participant cannot find work or study at all, NAV decides to place him or her on the social assistance aid. Based on my empirical findings and the literature, it is fair to conclude that the contribution of the Norwegian welfare state system to the long-term integration of refugees in the municipality of Kristiansand is through its multiple financial support to these refugees. This allows them to focus on acquiring human capital during and after Program Introduction so that they can find work afterwards and become productive. For refugees who cannot study or find work at all, the Municipality through NAV places them under social aid, and again thanks to the support of the welfare state system.

5.3 Human Capital on the Integration of Refugees

Human capital is a very demanding theory in the integration of refugees, mainly in Western host countries where language, education, professional experience, and other skills are a major requirement, especially when they want to enter the labour market. The literature highlights that human capital is a significant challenge when refugees seek to integrate into host societies and access opportunities. As for example Djuve and Kavli (2018) argue that human capital is not always easily transferable across borders. Most adult refugee immigrants, educated or not, have work experience in one field or another in their country of origin before arriving in Norway. However, based on my research question which determined how human capital impacts the integration of immigration refugees in the labour market. My empirical findings point out that all my refugee informants, including those who came with university degrees, have access to the labour market only after acquiring Norwegian human capital. Despite their best efforts to learn the language and study in Norway, as my empirical results suggest, and even the literature of Hardøy and Schøne (2014), finding relevant work seems complicated for many.

5.3.1 Language Proficiency

Language proficiency is considered by my informants to be the very first condition for the integration of refugees into Norwegian society, and in particular into the labour market in the municipality of Kristiansand. As discussed in the literature by Djuve and Kavli (2018), investing in mastering the language of the host country is beneficial not only for immigrants but also for society. This explains why the municipality puts more interest and resources into language training for refugees during the Introduction Program. Djuve and Kavli (2018) continue to assert that the immigrants who successfully adapt to the labour market of the host country are those who master its language. My empirical results show that middle-aged, less educated refugees and those with perceived health problems have more difficulty mastering the language and therefore entering the labour market. The literature agrees with my empirical findings demonstrate that language proficiency plays two opposing roles in integrating refugees into the labour market. On the one hand, according to Hayfron (2001), it enables refugees to approach potential employers and facilitates their access to employment. And on the other hand, although the refugees master the language, this does not guarantee them relevant work, which puts them in a situation of not exploiting their skills to the fullest. Hayfron (2001) also points

out that language is important in the integration process but not sufficient in the labour market, because the salary is not necessarily determined by the language of the country.

My empirical results also highlighted two other important challenges that prevent refugee immigrants from integrating into the labour market despite their language proficiency. First, the use of dialects in the workplace. The dialects being the Norwegians often practiced by natives of different regions of the country, contain words that are not regularly used in the official language. But also, the emergence of the tendency to promote “Nynorsk” (or the Norwegian language used in the past) as a condition of access to certain jobs. Two barriers that further hinder the access of immigrant refugees to the labour market, but which so far does not attract researchers in this field. The refugees only speak the so-called official Norwegian “Bokmål”, which they learn in the Introduction Program, at school, and which is mainly used in the administration. It is safe to conclude that language proficiency plays an important role in integrating refugees into the labour market in Kristiansand on the one hand and poses a significant challenge on the other.

5.3.2 Refugees’ Education Background

Most of my refugee informants who participated in this research according to my empirical findings did not complete high school in their country of origin or transit due to poverty and destabilization during wars and other atrocities. In their conclusion, Friberg and Midtbøen (2018) suggest that more than 70 per cent of African refugees arrive in Norway with a primary education level. However, although the majority of non-Western refugees arrive in Norway with too low a level of education, the literature and my empirical results clearly demonstrate that these refugees acquire human capital in Norway as they live there. They also point out that a significant number of immigrants who arrive with a high level of education acquire Norwegian human capital as quickly as possible. Djuve and Kavli (2018) and Badwi et al. (2018) certify this by showing that in Norway, highly educated refugees acquire human capital faster than the less educated. Unfortunately, as Hardøy and Schøne (2014) point out, education acquired in the country of origin may be of good quality but not fully transferable across national borders. As for my informants, the employers doubt about the level of education of the refugees from their countries of origin, more particularly non-Western, they think that it is not enough. This explains why most highly qualified refugees struggle to find jobs corresponding to their education acquired in their country of origin in the municipality of Kristiansand.

5.3.3 Approval of School Documents for Refugees in Norway

The question of the approval of school documents in Norway concerns only educated refugees. According to my empirical findings, refugees in this category, when they try by all means to find relevant jobs but without success, they opt for the approval of their school documents acquired in their country of origin. To start the process, they must collect the school documents they have, which means that educated refugees who have difficulty to find documents and/or those who have them but are difficult to verify are forced not to access this opportunity. In this case, they have no choice but to go back to high school or try to find a job. And as mentioned in the literature by Friberg and Midtbøen (2018), the lack of verified information on the education level of refugees exposes them to irrelevant and low-paid work.

My empirical findings, in agreement with Toker (2020), also point out that, although the policy of approving immigrants' school documents in Norway is a good initiative, the process is very demanding, especially for non-Western immigrants. It is a costly process, which takes time (not less than a year) and requires a lot of involvement. As a result, some highly educated refugees are demotivated and end up unemployed, and others in jobs for which they are overqualified, as also suggested by Badwi et al. (2018) in their study on the case of Ghanaian immigrants in Bergen, Norway. Although among these refugees there are some who manage to obtain the approval of their school documents despite the challenges mentioned, my empirical findings underline that this does not always guarantee them a relevant job in the Municipality. This is what pushes them to continue their studies by following the master's program or other studies depending on labour market opportunities.

5.3.4 Refugees' Education Acquired in Norway as a *sine qua non*

Regardless of the educational level of non-Western refugees before their arrival in Norway, all without exception are obliged to acquire new human capital beyond the Norwegian language before entering the labour market. According to Hardøy and Schøne (2014), this fact is due to the scepticism of employers who generalize that the education of non-Western immigrants acquired in their country of origin is insufficient or of poor quality even after being approved by the competent Norwegian bodies. The literature indicates that studying in Norway is a right and an obligation, as asserted by Yildiz (2019). My empirical findings confirm this by emphasizing that during the Introduction Program, refugees benefit from free studies. After this

program, for those who want to continue their studies, they apply for a scholarship and/or a student-loan. All this to facilitate their better integration by finding relevant jobs, to participate in the general well-being by paying taxes. However, as Djuve and Kavli (2018) point out, despite efforts to acquire Norwegian human capital, a significant number of refugees still have difficulty accessing the relevant local labour market, and among those who do, according to Brekke and Mastekaasa (2008) some face wage disadvantages relative to natives and other western immigrants. Barriers that my empirical findings confirm, which revolts some refugees and pushes them to decide to stay at home without doing anything to wait only for social assistance, and others to seek jobs for which they are overqualified.

5.4 Social Integration of Refugees

In accordance with my research question, how social integration through social capital facilitates the access of immigrant refugees to the labour market. Thus, social integration of refugees as the theme of this research alludes to the establishment of the social network in the host country. The relevance of social integration in the municipality of Kristiansand, especially after the Introduction Program where refugees are expected to lead their lives in a flourishing way, was confirmed by my empirical findings. Although considered one of the major challenges for refugees' integration, and especially middle-aged refugees, by my informants, access to social capital in this phase, as pointed out by Martinovic et al. (2009) opens doors to employment opportunities for them, but also ensures their inclusion. Laurensyeva and Venturini (2017) argue that social integration is possible once immigrants are accepted as members of society. My empirical findings, however, suggest that several barriers related to social integration prevent refugees from accessing relevant jobs to integrate into the municipality of Kristiansand. As in chapter Four on the empirical findings, in this chapter the theme of social integration is also subdivided into Five sub-themes as indicated during my thematic analysis.

5.4.1 Refugees Social Network

The limited social network of refugees, especially after the Introduction Program, was considered by my informants as one of the main obstacles to their integration into society in general and into the labour market in particular in the municipality of Kristiansand. Talking about social network alludes directly to social capital and, as Turner (2006) argues, social capital results from relationships between individuals, groups or communities that provide

access to valuable benefits in the host country. My empirical results and other studies such as that of Bourdieu (1986) emphasize that the more immigrants expand their network, the more they integrate and the more they access opportunities. My empirical findings also indicate that in Kristiansand, refugees create more social capital among themselves as a common group, and very often based on their origins, which Putnam (2000) calls bonding. This allows them to access job opportunities, but less secure and sometimes ephemeral. However, many refugees, and often middle-aged, fail to establish social capital with native Norwegians, or bridging according to Putnam (2000). As per my informants, this is due to scepticism and lack of trust towards immigrants, and especially non-Western refugees. Thus, without a strong social network with the natives in Kristiansand, the Norwegian human capital acquired by the refugees after the Introduction Program seems insufficient for many to find relevant jobs. Badwi et al. (2018) make the same observation using the case of Norway, Ghanaians in Bergen who are connected to themselves have less access to relevant jobs than those who forge links with Norwegians. The same observation is made by Ali et al. (2021), on the case of Syrian refugee immigrant families in Canada who have better integrated thanks to bridging.

5.4.2 Socio-Cultural Effects on Refugees Integration

As stated in my empirical findings and even in the literature of Ali et al. (2021) on the case of Canada and also that of Badwi et al. (2018) on the case of Bergen in Norway, socio-cultural rapprochement through diversity is a crucial way to include refugees in society in general and in the labor market in particular. Although Kristiansand has been known as a multicultural municipality for a few decades, refugees still seem to face integration limits due to the socio-cultural factor. In Kristiansand according to my informants, the natives live in restricted social circles, while the non-Western refugees are accustomed to open societies where, for example, getting to know or greeting someone is easy and simple. This means that most immigrants and especially non-Westerns maintain timid relations with natives and prevent them from establishing the social network to access employment. My empirical results underline that this socio-cultural barrier leads refugees, especially those of middle age, to develop a feeling of loneliness and exclusion, with the risk of catching diseases such as hypertension or others, which makes them even more vulnerable while finding employment. The conclusion of Friberg and Midtbøen (2018) in agreement with my empirical results suggests that in Norway, non-Western refugees have integration limits compared to Western immigrants insofar as they do not share important references such as linguistic, cultural, social, and religious with native

Norwegians. This not only prevents refugees from establishing their social network, but also makes employers sceptical about giving them work, and thus hinder their integration into the municipality.

5.4.3 Refugees Integration in the Labour Market

Employment was seen by my informants who participated in this study as a key factor in their integration, especially after the Introduction Program when they had already acquired a certain level of Norwegian human capital. Valenta (2008) estimates that the degree of inclusion or exclusion of immigrants depends on the level of access to employment. In other words, the more immigrants have access to employment, the more they are included and integrated into their new society. Kristiansand, according to my empirical findings, is a city with few jobs, and almost all companies, whether public or private, are run by natives who know each other. Thus, finding work and especially relevant work depends on the social network and much more on the references on the CV. As I pointed out earlier in this chapter, establishing a social network with the natives is a serious challenge for most refugees in Kristiansand. While employers are sceptical about hiring immigrants, especially non-Westerns, whom they do not know. This leads to underemployment for many refugees, especially those with a high level of education. As per my informants, all of these challenges lead some refugees to consider moving to bigger Norwegian cities where jobs are many and integration is easier, as employment conditions are less demanding and do not rely on a social network. An in-depth study by Midtbøen (2015) on ethnic discrimination in the Norwegian labour market also suggests that immigrants' foreign names constitute a barrier to accessing employment. My empirical results also point to this discriminatory nature of employers who push refugees to assimilation by leading them to change their original names to the detriment of Norwegian names, this to increase their chances of accessing work in Kristiansand.

5.4.4 Mainstream Discourse on Integration of Refugees

The influence of the mainstream discourse on the immigration of refugees in the Municipality of Kristiansand is reported in my findings as a factor of exclusion from society, even from employment. In the literature, Laurensyeva and Venturini (2017) point out that the mainstream discourse in host countries revolves around exclusive expressions, among others, cultural erosion, threats to national identity and notions of "us versus them". The negative influence of this mainstream discourse makes refugees victims of mobbing and exclusion, as is sometimes

the case for young refugees in the Post-Introduction Program phase when they access mainstream schools and study with the natives. For Agyare (2021), more than half of the Norwegian population believes that immigration creates more insecurity. As my informants point out, this tendency to generalize and always associate immigrants with certain crimes even before investigating the veracity of information reduces their chances of accessing jobs. The irony is that it affects even those who are already naturalized, with the risk of spreading to future generations. Again, according to Agyare (2021), although there are policies and approaches in Norway to address the challenges of discrimination and racism, these two factors still constitute a significant barrier to African immigrants' access to employment. It is therefore fair to conclude that the mainstream discourse on the integration of refugees is discriminatory, which makes employers sceptical and hinders refugees from accessing employment in the municipality of Kristiansand.

5.4.5 Public Strategies on Integration of Refugees

The public integration strategy for newly settled refugees in Nordic countries is carried out through the Introduction Program, launched in Norway since 2004 (Fernandes, 2015). At the end of this program, the refugees should be able to either continue their studies or find work. Those who fail to achieve either of these two objectives, the Municipality of Kristiansand uses other strategies to try to integrate them in order to find work. Among these strategies according to my empirical findings there are language practices, professional practices, and social activities. However, if my informants underlined the relevance of these initiatives, they also demonstrated their ineffectiveness in relation to their expectations. Regarding language practices, it seems that due to scepticism and lack of jobs in Kristiansand as mentioned above in this chapter, it is not easy to find the relevant practice places for the participants, those that correspond to their background as well as their future objective. This prevents them from expanding their network with potential employers and thus minimizes their chances of finding relevant jobs later on. When immigrant refugees complete their studies, most of them find professional practice (or an internship) sometimes through NAV if they could not make it by themselves. However, my informants suggest that some manage to get hired through professional practice, while others go from practice to practice without ever finding a job. They denounce the lack of follow-up by the Municipality which leaves them exploited by employers for years without hiring them. My informants also report that some refugees do not go to social activities for several reasons. Like for example "Språkkaffe", for its monotony, but also, they

believe that the natives who are interested in this activity are often old retirees who cannot help them too much to solve their integration challenges, such as accessing job opportunities. They would be more interested if active natives were also involved.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Concluding Remarks

As I mentioned at the beginning of this thesis (Chap. 1), the question of immigrants and especially that of refugees remains a topical subject, as long as wars and other atrocities persist in the world. By fleeing to Western countries for their safety and better future for their children, integrating in a fulfilling way into their host societies often poses enormous challenges for them. This research explores the difficulties and challenges that immigrant refugees are faced with in their everyday life after the Introduction Program while integrating the labour market, in Norway. Qualitative data for this research were collected using empirical methods including semi-structured interviews given the choice of the inductive strategy with a case study of Kristiansand municipality in Norway. The use of the purposive and snowball sampling method made it possible to obtain a relevant sample size of eighteen key informants. After transcription and coding, collected data were analyzed through thematic analysis method.

In this research, I considered immigrant refugees in the Post-Introduction Program phase and public officials (in NAV and Introduction Program), all from the Municipality of Kristiansand. The intent of this study is based on three research questions enquiring about the efficiency of the welfare state system in the long-term by integrating immigrant refugees; factors of human capital impacting their integration; and how social integration through social capital facilitates the access of immigrant refugees to the labour market. These questions are summed up in three main themes, which emerged during my thematic analysis, these are; the welfare state system, human capital, and social integration. The logic is such that when refugees are resettled in the municipality, they receive support from the welfare state system to meet their basic needs while acquiring the human capital in the Introduction Program. In the Post-Introduction Program phase, some participants use the human capital acquired in the Introduction Program to find work. Others were still supported by the welfare state but in the form of scholarships and student loans, so as to continue their studies. It was found that after efforts to acquire human capital, social integration through the establishment of the social network becomes, in most cases, an essential condition in the Municipality, regardless of the level of education reached to access relevant employment.

This research has focused more on studying and understanding the limitations of access to employment after the introduction program that hinder the integration of immigrant refugees in

the municipality of Kristiansand. To better understand the challenges of access to employment in the Post-Introduction Program phase, I first considered the Introduction Program as a starting point, as it constitutes the basis of the integration of refugees in Norway. The good treatment of refugees during the Introduction Program through financial support, studies and continuous mentoring appeared to lead them to focus on preparing for the Post-Introduction Program phase. It is at the end of the Introduction Program that the refugees who have not succeeded in reaching the levels required either to access jobs or to pursue studies after this program who are more concerned about their integration at this stage. The study suggests that most of the refugees who fail to meet the goals of the Introduction Program which are to find a job or continue with studies at this stage are middle-aged and less educated.

In addition, the study notes that to make refugees more competitive in the labor market after the Introduction Program, a new integration law extending the duration of the Introduction Program to four years for refugees who wish to complete their secondary education has been passed. This new law, which has been in force since January 2021, has been appreciated in this study as it motivates refugees to acquire more human capital and puts them in a better position to continue their studies or access the relevant labor market after the Introduction Program. However, as expressed by the informants in this study, this law only favours participants who are younger and educated, and yet more able in terms of integration during and even after the Introduction Program compared to middle-aged and less educated ones. Therefore, extending the time for them too in the Introduction Program up to four years in a short vocational training would also allow them to find relevant work and gain more language proficiency.

The objective of the municipality through the Introduction Program is that after having acquired the human capital, the refugees find work in the Post-Introduction Program phase and contribute to the general economic well-being by paying taxes. Hence, a win-win operation between the Municipality and the refugees. Participants who are unable to find work or continue their education after the Introduction Program, the municipality through NAV, grants them a maximum of two years in the Outro Program to try to facilitate finding jobs. If access to employment still seems impossible, NAV places them on social assistance where they receive financial support to meet their basic needs while doing professional practices in order to find a job. This proves how much the Municipality of Kristiansand relies on the welfare state system to ensure the integration of refugees during and even after the Introduction Program.

The challenges of access to employment and more particularly to relevant jobs which prevent the refugees from integrating into the municipality of Kristiansand begin to be felt in the Post-Introduction Program phase when the refugees have already acquired a certain level of Norwegian human capital. According to this study, limits of access to employment in the post-Introduction Program phase in the municipality of Kristiansand are related to human capital and social integration. With regard to human capital, the challenge of language proficiency is the very first barrier that hinders refugees from accessing employment in the Post-Introduction Program phase. Refugees face dialect challenges, but also an emerging tendency to promote “Nynorsk” rather than “Bokmål” as a criterion for access to certain jobs, also hinders them from finding work. Despite the effort to master the language, this does not always guarantee relevant jobs to refugees, thus hindering their integration into the Municipality.

Still related to human capital, after the Introduction Program, when highly educated refugees try to find employment with their education acquired in their country of origin, they face skepticism from employers. Within this context, employers think that the education of non-Western refugees acquired in their countries of origin is not sufficient or not to the standard required by available jobs, and as a result, they do not hire them. When highly educated refugees find that the studies from their countries of origin are not accepted in the labour market, they apply for the approval of their school documents in order to maximize the possibility of finding works. Obtaining the approval of school documents from their country of origin, which is also a very challenging process, still does not help highly educated refugees find relevant employment. This represents a barrier that puts them in the same situation as their less educated counterparts, although not at the same level. They are obliged to first acquire Norwegian human capital before entering the labour market. This study suggests that despite all the efforts made by refugees to acquire Norwegian human capital, a significant number of them, and especially the highly educated, do not always manage to find qualified employment. This leads them to look for jobs for which they are overqualified and resulting in others, angry, deciding to stay at home doing nothing while collecting social assistance payments, which hinders their integration into the Municipality.

Several challenges related to social integration also hinder refugees from finding relevant work and integrating into the Municipality of Kristiansand after the Introduction Program. The limited social networks of refugees, especially with natives, is one of the barriers to their access to relevant employment and which hinders their social integration. The lack of trust and

scepticism of the natives towards the refugees pushes the latter to develop social capital among themselves, with the consequence of finding less secure and short-term jobs. Informants in this study highlighted the socio-cultural factor as another challenge that prevented refugees from creating social relationships with natives in order to access relevant employment in Kristiansand. Culturally, the natives of Kristiansand live in restricted social circles. The fact that non-Western refugees, in particular, do not share important linguistic, cultural, social and religious references with natives makes it difficult for them to access social capital. This makes employers in Kristiansand rather reluctant to hire refugees due to socio-cultural differences and prevents them from integrating into the municipality.

Still within the framework of social integration, the challenges of integration into the labour market in the Municipality of Kristiansand after the Introduction Program were reported by informants in this study as discriminatory. The fact that in Kristiansand there are few jobs and that accessing them depends on refugees' social network with natives and strong references on their CVs which are difficult to establish, makes many of them consider moving to larger Norwegian cities where conditions are less demanding. The discriminatory character that pushes refugees towards assimilation by changing their original names to the detriment of Norwegian names has also been highlighted in this study as a factor preventing refugees from entering the labor market in Kristiansand. The mainstream discourse on the integration of refugees negatively influences natives and more particularly employers. Although policies exist to eradicate this discriminatory trend, this challenge persists informally and makes employers sceptical and prevents refugees from accessing employment in the municipality.

The last challenge regarding social integration in this study concerns the public strategies. After acquiring Norwegian human capital, refugees struggle to find a place for their relevant professional practice. Among the strategies, the municipality through NAV facilitates those who are not able to find places for relevant professional practices on their own. However, the lack of follow-up by the municipality when the refugees are in professional practice allows employers to abuse them by exploiting them without hiring them. The refugees thus spend several years in professional practices with no hope of finding a job. In terms of social activities, the more involved young and active natives are than older retirees, the more refugees participate and establish the potential social network to find jobs. Therefore, other policies and strategies should be added to the existing ones, so that refugees have the access for relevant employment

in the Post-Introduction Program phase and integrate actively into society in Kristiansand municipality.

6.2 Policy Recommendations

Four policy recommendations were selected from this research, among others:

- The new integration law 2020 on extending the duration of the introduction program in order to strengthen the human capital of refugees should concern them all without exception. This law according to participants in this research favours young and educated refugees at the expense of middle-aged and less educated people who are more vulnerable in terms of integration. The municipality should also give them a little more time so that they can also integrate actively into the society by accessing jobs.
- After acquiring Norwegian human capital, refugees and especially graduates end up with student loans of more than 500,000 Kroner for some, and which they can only pay if they find work. However, after their studies, as is well developed in the body of this thesis, most of them suffer from finding relevant jobs that can help them not only to put the knowledge acquired at the service of society but also to improve their savings and especially to be able to repay these student loans. The more this category of refugees struggles to find work, the more the conditions for repayment of these loans become tougher and the more their integration becomes more complicated. The Municipality should therefore try to take their case seriously by facilitating their access to relevant jobs. This would facilitate their inclusion, as well as their participation in the development of the municipality, and would even promote their integration.
- The municipality, through NAV, should help the immigrant refugees to find professional practice places after acquiring the Norwegian human capital, above all also must follow up and try to find a way with the employers in order to hire them. According to this research, a considerable number of refugees do not find work despite several years spent in these professional practices.
- Since the establishment of the social network is essential for the integration of immigrant refugees not only into society in general but also and above all into the labour

market, the municipality should seek strategies to encourage active ethnic Norwegians to participate in voluntary activities, in order to arouse the interest of the refugees. This would allow them to establish relevant social networks and access opportunities more easily in the municipality, such as finding work.

6.3 Recommendations for Further Study

Integration being a very broad theme, and considering the limits of this study, there are areas in the findings that appear to open doors for future research, either to deepen or touch on other aspects not exploited in this study. A significant development in research on immigrant integration in Norway has been observed in recent times. However, there is still a lack of research focused on the integration of refugees after the Introduction Program, where refugees face several challenges, especially when trying to access the labour market. Although I have chosen the municipality of Kristiansand as my case study, it could be interesting to do the same research in a particular rural municipality or in a large Norwegian city. A comparative analysis between young and middle-aged refugees or between men and women would also be of great interest.

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