

Making the Integration process work: The effectiveness of labor integration policies for refugee women in Norway

Limitations that hinder refugee women's integration

SUNJEDA AFROZE

SUPERVISOR

Arnhild Leer Helgesen

University of Agder, 2023

Faculty of Social Science

Department of Global Development and Planning



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By

Sunjeda Afroze

Supervisor

Arnhild Leer Helgesen

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Faculty of Social Science

Department of Global Development and Planning

Abstract

Globally, millions of refugees and migrants are crossing borders, seeking to flee social, economic, cultural, and political inequity and violence, and searching for a better life. Migrant and refugee women are considered a vulnerable group who may experience challenges in adapting to a new country. As the world continues to face the challenges of increasing refugee rates, strengthening and implementing the integration processes, especially labor integration, becomes essential for the host countries. Hence, the study aims to explore the difficulties and challenges refugee women face in their daily lives. This research was conducted in the municipality of Kristiansand in Norway. Ten participants from non-Western countries and NAV officials conducted semi-structured interviews to achieve this aim. The results of the findings were transcribed and analyzed using a mixed coding and thematic analysis.

The study results showed that several challenges related to refugee women's integration into the market largely depend on human and social capital. Challenges such as language proficiency approval of the educational documents studies in Norway constituted human capital in their integration into the labor market. Despite efforts to overcome these challenges and acquire human capital still, most refugees do not have the relevant job. Most participants believe that the introduction program offered by the government positively impacted labor integration. Nevertheless, social capital –regarding social networks and social-cultural participation- is also essential in job-seeking. Regarding strategies, most participants join social gatherings and social activities and master the native language. Along with this, most of them wish to explore them with the new society, giving years, and some initial steps were taken by them as work as their initial strategy, which facilitate their integration process actively on the society.

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I also take this opportunity to sincerely thank my husband for always being my support system and heartily loving my daughter. When I started my thesis task, she was only three months old, always innocent, and gave me the strength to work hard.

Finally, my parents live far away from me but always encourage me to do the master's program.

Declaration

I, Sunjeda Afroze, declare that this master's thesis named " Making the Integration Process Effective: The Effectiveness of Labor Integration Policies for Refugee Women in Norway" is my original work. I also state that this thesis has yet to be submitted to any academic institute besides the University of Agder, Norway.

Place	Signature	Date
Kristiansand, Norway	Sunjeda afroze	December, 2023

List of Abbreviations

EU- European Union

IMDi- Integrerings- og Mangfolds Direktoratet (The Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity)

IMO- International Organization for Migration

NAV— Ny arbeids- og velferdsforvaltning (New labour and welfare Administration)

NOKUT- Nasjonalt Organ for Kvalitet i Utdanningen (The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education)

NSD- – Norsk Senter for Forskningsdata (Norwegian Center for Research Data)

UiA— Universitetet I Agder (University of Agder)

UNHCR- (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

CV- Curriculum Vitae

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Chapter one: Introduction

1.1 Introduction:

Migratory flow is considered one of the oldest phenomena in human history. It is often associated with various circumstances, including wars, conflict, persecution, and other human rights. According to the United Nations Agency for Refugees (UNHCR), in 2018, more than 70 million people fled from their own country. This has been a top record for almost 70 years (Ibid). Europe has been one of the host countries for several refugees from different war zones. Europe has about 1.5 million certified refugees (Cheung & Phillimore, 2017, p. 212). A recognized refugee is someone who arrived as an asylum seeker and the process, and for the time being, these asylum seekers are declared genuine refugees (Cheung & Phillimore, 2017 p.213). After the US, Germany, France, Sweden, the UK, and Norway have the highest number of asylum applications. As of January 2020, 174,000 refugees live in Norway; 115,000 arrived as asylum seekers and 41,000 as resettlement refugees (Statistisk sentralbyrå. March, 2021). The number of refugees granted resident permits in Norway varies yearly. Approximately 1850 asylum seekers were granted permission for settlement in 2020, while 2016 was the peak year, with the highest 11,000 Syrians settlement (Raanaas et al., 2019). Around one in five immigrants in Norway or 3% of the entire population, arrived in Norway as refugees (Statistisk sentralbyrå. March 2021). According to Norwegian ministries, Eritrean, Syrian, and Afghan citizens were the most registered immigrants (Ibid). In Norway, any immigration case is handled by the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) by the country's immigration law and regulations (Norwegian Ministries, 2018). However, unlike the refugees that Norway brings alone, asylum seekers, after their examination process, are placed in reception centers (Norwegian Ministries, 2018). In case of obtaining a resident permit as a refugee, the person is first assigned to the host municipality (Ibid). Then, the

municipality offers them the Introduction program to facilitate their integration process. The introduction program is designed for people who need basic qualifications; a certificate of participation sanctions it at the end or in case of interruption (Ibid).

The introduction program is entirely under the government's responsibility through the municipalities, which offer immigrant refugees opportunities such as strengthening their capacity to participate in professional and social life and improving their financial independence (Lovdata,2003). The Introduction program provides refugees with skills such as learning the Norwegian language, social life, and culture (Ibid). Usually, the Introduction program is followed for two years. However, in the last few years, the idea of extending the time of the refugee introduction program has been the subject of debate. In 2020, a new law on the extension of the program was passed (IMdi,2021). This new law gives more time to those who need it to learn the language and access opportunities such as continuing education or integrating into the labor market.

1.2 Refugee integration:

Worldwide, societies are becoming more diverse and heterogeneous today. Therefore, it has become essential for the host society to make the field the most accessible for the women who have often fled. In recent years, integration and immigration have become a powerful topic for all the host countries.

Integration is a debatable and multidimensional concept. To better understand integration, it is essential to know the indicators that help in social policy, such as housing, education, job offers, health, gender difference, social networking, etc. Integration level and the power of adaption for refugee women depend on several things, such as post-arrival experiences, environment, culture (Robila, 2018), etc. In addition to this, asylum-seeking women face the challenges of a socio-cultural problem with the extent of vulnerable physical and mental health issues. Moreover, lower socioeconomic conditions and language barriers make resettlement difficult (Mangrio et al., 2019). It could be impeded for the integration indicators for a long time. Indeed, integrating migrants and refugees is one of the ever-growing urgencies (Heilbrunn et al., 2010,p.2). The integration program is one of the leading

immigration adjustment strategies that has become popular in the host community in recent decades. Despite all the other integration processes, there is a clear need for more research to improve the understanding level of this phenomenon and find practical solutions for female immigrants' better integration process.

Many experts explain the necessity to explore integration as a multidimensional process where individuals, government, the institute, and society all have a role to play (Ager & Strang, 2008; Council of Europe, 1997; Martiny et al., 2020). Though integration is an argumentative concept from the beginning, some experts outline the functional dimensions such as education, labor market, health, and housing as crucial indicators; some argue that these indicators are just the beginning points. Others focused on developing integration related to structural and organizational elements (Phillimore, 2011,p.527). While there is no clear definition for integration, it depends more on the host society and the newcomers. It also encloses the social network and practices the right to essential resources (Man, 2004). Development has been made in understanding these functional indicators, thus helping the immigrants towards success (Cheung & Phillimore, 2017).

1.3 Research problem

In recent years, the integration of immigrants has become an overpowering topic for the world, and it will take place as long as some disturbing world factors, including war, political issues, violation of human rights, natural and artificial disasters, and poverty, persist in the world. There is a need for more research to improve our knowledge and understanding of this phenomenon and develop the effectiveness of better integration of immigrants not only in Norway but also in the other host countries.

Immigrants' problems do not end when they arrive in the host country (Fauri, Mantovani&Strangio,2021), but they will face new obstacles once they access the host society. Furthermore, the barriers that first immigrants face upon arrival include language, labor market discrimination, education, reduction in a social context, etc. (Fauri et al.,2021). I will focus on the integration process of refugee women as they are more vulnerable, and many of them arrive alone in the host country and need to fight all the integration barriers (Phillimore,2012).

Many of them are more emotional, lose sexual interest than men(Robila, 2018), isolate themselves from the new society, and mostly become depressed.

The delimitation has underlined how the host society has a significant role in the refugee women's integration. This multidimensional integration process requires immigrant women to adapt to the host community's lifestyle (Bakker et al., 2009,p.432).

After arriving in Kristiansand municipality, adult female refugees were offered a program. This program is compulsory for all adult refugees aged 18 to 55 and their families who have obtained a residence permit in Norway (IMDi, 2019). The introductory program is a suitable case for those seeking better integration of refugees into Norwegian society by introducing them to the Norwegian language, social life, and culture.

In this research paper, I will explore the after-introduction phase, where I will focus on the difficulties and challenges immigrant refugee women face in their everyday lives with integration into the labor market. I want to understand the limits to access jobs after the introduction program and how this might hinder refugee women's integration process.

The research considers only the case of non-Western female refugee immigrants in Kristiansand Municipality. I selected a sample of 10 informants for my primary data collection. This research targets nine refugee women, and one will be a public official or decision-maker who works for the refugee immigrants.

1.4 Research objectives:

Immigration is a permanent component of European societies, and integration is viewed as a vibrant, long-term, and constant two-sided process of mutual accommodation that necessitates the participation of each resident. This burden is on states to create economic, social, cultural, and political opportunities for immigrants (Spencer,2011). The influence of immigration is also affected by the degree of economic and cultural integration of immigrants in the region. While economic reasons shape perceptions towards immigrants, other variables such as local positions and cultural factors also shape how immigrants are seen (Akay et al., 2014). The logic of this research starts from the introduction program, which is the basis for integrating immigrant refugees in Norway. Here, key objectives are pursued in this work-

- The first is to examine if the Introduction Program is effective according to immigrant refugees and municipal officials and if it 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 female refugees during and after the introduction program.
- The third is to determine whether the human and social capital support to immigrant refugees contributes to the inability to cope with life after the Introduction program.
- The fourth is determining whether immigrant refugees actively participate in their integration.

Immigrant refugees must face the realities of daily life like any other immigrant or Norwegian. According to the rules of nature, female refugees' abilities trace their path to better integration. This is the most challenging phase of integration -in the race for opportunities such as education, job (employment), training (language), and so on, where access to these opportunities appears unequal between the ethnic Norwegians, immigrants from the EU, and non-Western refugees. Women are especially vulnerable and emotional regarding access to the labor market (Gele et al., 2015; Masuku & Rama, 2020). Less educational qualifications and poor economic support in a new society stress them. The objective is to seek strategies for how women with refugee backgrounds improve their lives and how integration becomes a win-win process for them to contribute to the host community for socioeconomic development.

My master's program in the field of Global development, combined with my job, is also related to various services for refugees in Norway, which gave me the motivation and knowledge to examine their integration process in Norway.

1.5 Research questions:

Following the above research objectives, the research will be guided by the following research questions:

1. How does human capital increase the job opportunities for female refugees?
2. What is the role of social capital in resisting employment opportunities for female refugees?

1.6 Geographic study area and context:

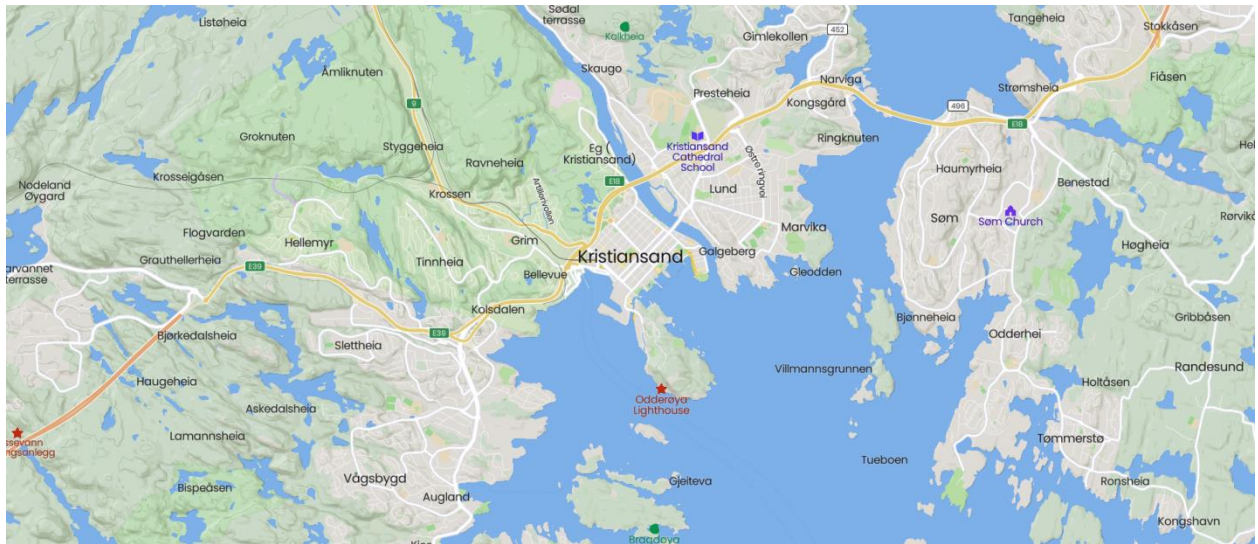
The research will be conducted in the southern part of Norway. Norway is in northern Europe, bounded on the North, West, and South by the Barents Sea and the North-Atlantic Ocean or Norwegian Sea and the North Sea. It is bordered on the East by Sweden, Finland, and Russia (Sverige et al.).

Norway is known as a destination country for immigrants. Norway has a robust welfare system, and the welfare state has been a principal component in Norway's national process after World War II (ibid). The Norwegian economy is mixed and prosperous, with a substantial private sector and comprehensive social safety. Norway has access to immigrants' civil and social rights and a legally established immigrant policy. Immigration is an essential factor in population growth in Norway (SSB,2018). Since 1950, due to immigration, the Norwegian population has increased by approximately 2 million; currently, the country has 5.3 million (SSB, 2019).

Norway has eleven regions, and the Agder region is one of them. This Agder district includes both East Agder and West Agder. My focus area, Kristiansand, is in the west of Agder. The municipality of Kristiansand is the sixth largest in Norway, with 113 737 population (Kristiansand municipality,2020). Kristiansand is the fifth largest city in Norway and the administrative center of Agder country. It borders the North, East, and West municipalities of Vennesla and Birkenes, Lillesand, and Lindesnes.

Kristiansand is a multicultural city with over 161 citizens from different countries(Ibid). The diversity among the citizens of Kristiansand makes it a developing city; hence, the municipality of Kristiansand requires that all citizens contribute to the city's further development (Ibid).

I selected this municipality as my research area because it matches my research objectives. Research shows that refugees who live here are mainly from Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Somalia, Pakistan, Vietnam, and from different countries. So, there is a chance to find many refugees from diverse cultural backgrounds here. Therefore, it is easy to research this part of Norway and bring out the actual result.



(Picture source: Google map)

1.7 Definition of terms:

Before starting the profound arguments on the labor integration of refugee women in Norway, it would be helpful to clarify some experiences and concepts of this study.

Integration:

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines *integration* as a two-way process of mutual adaptation between migrants and the societies in which they live. It entitles a set of joint responsibilities for migrants and communities. The term integration is

multidimensional and has several meanings; the definitions used in this study (Chapter Two) are consistent with the IOM's.

Immigrant:

From the country of arrival perspective, an immigrant is a person who moves into a country other than his/her nationality or usual residence.

Refugee:

The meaning of the term refugee draws its reference from the UN Convention of 1951, people who are forced to abandon their countries due to violence and persecution. Due to such fear is unwilling to avail him/her 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).

Western refugees: They are refugees from the European region.

Non-western: They are refugees who come from outside of the European regions.

Introduction program:

According to IDMi (2019), the introduction program is a program from 6 months to 2/3 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 residence permit in Norway and settled in the municipality in order to obtain basic qualification.

1.7 Thesis 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 and (6) conclusion.

It began with a brief introduction to refugee and immigrant integration in Norway. In the following chapter, I describe the reason for this research and how it is conducted in detail. Then, it identified the study objectives, problem statement, and questions discussed in this thesis. Also, it discussed geography, which helps to understand the target groups and areas.

In Chapter Two, a literature review will be discussed, with the relevant literature on the research questions collected; I will also explain in detail the theoretical framework the theories retained. These theories are human capital and social capital. Chapter three

Explains the methodology of this research. In this chapter, the research design applied to the study will be discussed in detail. The qualitative research method is used to answer research questions. It also described the research design, strategies, sampling methods of choosing participants, data collection tools, and analyzing methods. Also, ethical considerations and research challenges. In chapter four, I present my findings on the challenges and difficulties female immigrant refugees face in the integration process. In chapter five, I focus on analyzing and discussing

the literature, the findings, and the theories. I will also answer the question by using the following analysis and theories. The final chapter six is devoted to concluding remarks, policy, and recommendations for further study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction:

This thesis paper is based on several academic literature to find the appropriate theories related to my research objectives and adequately answer my research questions. It provides an overview of the core debates regarding immigration and integration in a general sense, particularly in Norway. Building on the existing literature, this chapter presents an overview of the literature related to the integration status, then focuses on the Scandinavian integration policies and narrows down Norway's integration strategy. Finally, the theories and concepts are outlined below.

2.2 Overview of the literature:

During the last couple of decades, the integration of refugees, particularly economic and social integration, has long been captured in Europe. The reasons for migration are numerous;

in this work, my attention is focused on female refugee immigrants who have had Norway as their host country.

.According to data from Eurostat, the group of refugee women has increased globally. As a result, the integration of women refugees is getting more attention than before. Norway, through its famous welfare state system, considered one of the successful examples of socioeconomic welfare, has made it the target and destination of many refugees for decades. Once the residency issue has been regularized, immigrant refugees are placed under the full responsibility of authorized municipalities in Norway, where refugees get full support in their integration under the Introduction program (Ibid).

Phillimore (2012) asserts that integration becomes successful when immigrants show their interest in taking part in various host activities and tend to make use of their rights in different contexts. Since refugee women have arrived from different environments where opportunities were unavailable, accessing the host country is deemed a new pathway. Therefore, employment is crucial in refugee integration policies, although alleviating poverty is essential (Bloch, 2008). The strategies to combat female refugee groups' unemployment rate combine capacity-building measures through education and skills attainment (Bloch, 2008).

My attention was first to the introduction program as the basis for integrating refugees in Norway. The ideological basis inspires this program in Norway and other Scandinavian countries (Andersen,1984). The discussion first focuses on the introduction program works, allowing me to understand the limitations several researchers have criticized. Then, gradually explain Norway's perspective regarding this program.

2.2.1 Scandinavian Immigrants Integration:

The Scandinavian welfare system has a widespread monitoring of refugee integration. Over 50 years ago, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark moved from emigrant to immigrant society (Olwig, 2011). From then, refugee integration became a pivotal part of these welfare states and offered several efficient subsidiaries such as education, housing, and economic support

(Olwig, 2011; Valenta & Bunar, 2010). The Scandinavian countries are also famous for their ideological approach to socially solid democratic governments (Olwig, 2011). Andersen (1984) pointed out (cited in Olwig, 2011, p.180) that these countries are based on the universalist Nordic model. The Nordic model of social protection, called the "Introduction program," was first launched in Sweden in 1991, Denmark in 1999, and followed by Norway in 2004 (Fernandes, 2015). This program aims to reduce the challenges of unemployment, social exclusion, training, and discrimination of freshly arrived refugees (Ibid). Fernandes (2015) states that the introduction program combines the policy of activating and integrating refugees. Djuve and Kavli (2018) called this program a dual-nature activation policy because it seeks to increase refugee labor market opportunities and applies sanctions to regulate their behavior. Though this vast program was launched by the Nordic countries as a driving force, according to some researchers, more is needed to solve the refugee difficulties and challenges in the post-introduction program phase. For Fernandes (2015), the successful and sustainable integration of refugees depends on accessing the labor market, but it poses various difficulties in Nordic countries. According to Djuve and Kavli (2018), Nordic countries' highly skilled labor market has proven difficult for non-Western refugees to integrate.

Although Scandinavian countries have been popular as immigrant destinations, the main challenge for these countries is to balance the vast number of refugees' resettlement, where some refugees come with low levels of education (Joyce, 2019). Among them, the scenario of female education is worse than that of men. A survey showed that 19 percent of female refugees completed two years of tertiary education. Scandinavian countries generally offer to work efficiently, whereas refugees have more difficulty finding a suitable job than natives and other European members (Fernandes, 2015; Joyce, 2019).

Moreover, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden have a full-time adopted program for refugee integration, with conditional payments upon their participation. Still, these countries have yet to succeed entirely in the chapter on refugee integration (Olwig, 2011; Fernandes, 2015). Olwig (2011) argues that in the welfare state integration structure, the refugee integration program is more suitable to the Scandinavian state than the necessity of immigrants.

2.3 Norway Integration Strategy:

Norway started the immigration system later than other European countries. Today, Norway is one of the better-known countries for immigrants. As a well-developed welfare state, the Norwegian government set up its plan for immigrant integration. As explained above, in 2004, Norwegian authorities established a two-year Introduction program for newly arrived refugees. This Introduction program addresses educational and financial factors (Hagelund, 2005).

The main goal of the introduction program is to increase the opportunities for refugee immigrants in the field of education and language training to succeed in the job market (Abamosa, 2021). Even after many years of integration policy in Norway, many refugee immigrant has lower participation rate in the education or vocational sector as well as low labor force participation. The fundamental concept and the quality of the integration activities in municipalities were criticized in many research and social discussions (IMDi,2019, November 28).

This program aims to train the refugee participants in language and social studies components to improve their language abilities in education and getting a job in society (IMDi,2009, November 28). However, The low accessibility in the Norwegian job market and low rate in the educational sector means that female refugees take this socioeconomic and cultural integration as a problem (Shishehgar et al., 2017), which is also a financial burden for the Norwegian welfare state. Due to this problem, the Norwegian political agenda revisited the integration of refugees (Ibid). Some reasons behind the low accessibility in the host society are as follows- First, most female refugees have post-traumatic psychological challenges from wars, family violence, and political issues in their countries of origin(Brook & Gwanzura Ottemöller, 2020; Keles et al., 2016; George, 2010). Second, most lack primary education, where education is the heart of various integration policies (Ait et al., 2019). Other researchers also focused on education integration (Joyce, 2019; Hagelund, 2005; Abamosa et al., 2020). Language proficiency is another cause why the integration creates a gap between refugee women and native individuals (Raanaas et al., 2019; Abraham et al., 2018; Council of Europe, 1997; Cheung & Phillimore, 2017).This

Indicates that low level of education and language problem creates obstacles for immigrant refugee women in their day-to-day life.

2.4 Theoretical concept:

As a welfare state, Norway focuses on the socioeconomic well-being of its citizens, and its citizens support this system by paying high taxes to guarantee general well-being (Olwig,2011). When female refugees arrive in Norway, they benefit from this welfare state system in their integration process. In the post-introduction program phase, they can be self-confident, participate in the country's socioeconomic development, and manage their economy. That also helps them enter the labor market, which is essential for their integration; What is the winning point for female refugee women. This research considers two theoretical perspectives, constituting this study's theoretical framework. These two theories are –the theory of human capital and social capital. These two theories are linked within the framework for this project. After arrival, all refugees, whether overeducated or less, must integrate into the Norwegian education system to acquire human capital. Thus helping them to enter the labor market. In Western host countries, human capital is essential for integrating refugee immigrants (Lundborg, 2013). However, human capital facilitates the integration of female refugees into the labor market. Social capital is another multidimensional theory that facilitates integration in the labor market and the new society. Although these theories give a basic knowledge of immigration and integration in general.

2.4.1 Human capital theory:

The human capital theory is widely accepted concerning the skill, knowledge, and ability that an employee provides for an organization. Choudhury and Mishra (2010) defined *human capital* as a theory related to educational training and skills. However, the definitions of human capital theory can differ in different contexts, depending on the theme, i.e., educational and intellectual qualification in general. Luik, Emilsson, and Bevelander (2016)

state that the human capital theory determines labor market success. The human capital theory is crucial for my research because new refugee women need to integrate into the new societies with a new strategic plan, where the elements of human capital help them facilitate their integration, especially in the job market. As a result, much of the research emphasizes that forming human capital improves the standard given to financial development and reduces inequalities in the host society. Qualification is essential for a female refugee in Western society, where most immigrants arrive without or with meager educational qualifications. Becker et al. (2007) added that education and training are critical investments in human capital. This fundamental factor raises the integration level not only into the daily life of a refugee but also creates effects on their productive work, boosting their economic status. Many authors agree that education is a basic human need and is a long-term investment for immigrants (Ager & Strang, 2008; Joyce, 2019; Liebig & Tronstad, 2018).

Man (2004) emphasized that the Canadian new immigrant policy is linked with human capital, where immigrants with educational qualifications and official language experience as official immigrant workers are given priority. Therefore, this policy boosts Canada's global market. On the other side, these policies have a negative impact on refugee women's employment because of their low qualifications in the new country (Man, 2004). On a similar note, in the UK, due to the lack of acquiring new knowledge or skills (such as an educational degree or professional training), refugee employees face discrimination; they are given significantly fewer job opportunities (Bloch, 2008).

An Australian journal that language proficiency shapes the overall immigration process for refugees. Language is essential for post-migration human capital (Hayfron, 2001), but after arriving in the host country, language creates another barrier for refugee immigrants (Joyce, 2019; Bloch, 2008; Zwysen, 2019). Kunz (1973) argues that many refugees isolate themselves from the human contract in the host country because they feel strange in a linguistically unknown environment. According to Hayfron (2001, p.1971), acquiring a language help immigrant achieve their pre-migration skills and become a potential employee in the host country. When immigrants learn their native language, they can understand how the labor market works. When acquiring education, the gap between natives and immigrants regarding human capital can be reduced. Language and education are two key components; without one cannot integrate into a welfare society, especially in Norway. As an example -In Norway, new refugees who are low-skilled and have poor Norwegian languages face extra difficulties, which are even worse in the case of women refugees (Badwi et al., 2018; p.35).

Therefore, the Norwegian introduction program is essential for learning the Norwegian language and civic education. According to Fernandes (2015) and Hagelund (2005), these two-year language programs need longer to acquire human capital and employment in a new society. To motivate immigrant refugees and encourage them to learn Norwegian skills, the government passed a new law in 2021. In this new system, authorities elaborate on the duration of the introductory program for those who want to complete secondary education (IMDi,2021). An Australian journal demonstrates that English language tuition is insufficient for refugee women in Australia. This point looks logical when we give concentration to the point of Zwysen (2019); he said it is not so easy to absorb a new environment with so many barriers within a short period; it takes at least

five years for refugees and their families to found human capital (new education and equalizing with their past education) and to fulfill market demand. Overall, integration into a new society is lengthy (Hagelund, 2005; McPherson, 2010; Phillimore, 2012).

This study addresses that the Scandinavian countries have similar integration strategies as an introduction program. In Norway, a governmental organization named NOKUT (the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education) is also responsible for evaluating refugee immigrants' higher education backgrounds (Abamosa, 2021).NOKUT carefully and individually examines the case of each refugee immigrant so that eligible persons get approval. However, the process is demanding and requires sufficient resources and time (not less than a year) (Toker, 2020). This time duration demotivated some participants and depressed, and some of them became unemployed.

The characteristics of immigrants have a crucial influence on the human capital acquired in their country of origin. Immigrants from countries where the language, education, culture, and economic development differ from host countries face skepticism about their human capital, hence the inequality among the ethnic population in the labor market (Ibid). Luik, Emilsson, and Bevelander (2018) assert that skills may translate differently across countries. Zimmermann (2016) also showcase a survey of Germany and Denmark, where in Denmark, only young immigrant asked about their previous educational degree; they showed very little interest in terms of immigrant higher education or vocational training (what is acquired in their homeland), especially for the non-western immigrant. Wilkinson and Wilkinsos&Garcea (2017) compare the percentage of Canadian refugees who are very low in employment to the percentage of immigrants who have Canadian education.

Finding a job in a Nordic country, mainly in Norway, seems more difficult for non-Western immigrant refugees than other Western immigrants (Raanaas et al., 2019; Joyce, 2019).

According to Badwi, Ablo, and Overa (2018), successful integration into the labor market is simply a matter of securing a permanent full-time job and the level of the individual's skill. Concisely, immigrants from countries where the language, education, economic development, management system, and culture are quite different from the host country, it is evident that immigrants face unevenness in the human capital sectors.

2.4.2 Social Capital:

In addition to human capital, scholars emphasize the significance of social capital, particularly for the refugees who struggle to integrate and enter their host countries' labor market. According to Lin (2017), social networks and social relations among and within individuals and groups form the foundation of social capital. It improves the relationship of immigrants with the members of other ethnic groups, thereby facilitating refugees' economic and cultural integration (Martinovic et al., 2009). Hackman and Bostwick (2000) define the theory of social integration as a process of including immigrants and creating a relationship with the native people in the host society. According to Martinovic, Tubergen, and Maas (2009), establishing a social network with natives can facilitate refugee immigrants' integration, such as learning the language and finding a job in the host society. Social theory refers to incorporating immigrants into the labor market and adopting the values and customs of the host country (Martinovic et al., 2009, p.870).

The literature highlights the social capital of refugee immigrants, in the form of their networks with the natives and among themselves, as an essential factor for labor integration. Laurensyeva and Venturini (2017) asserted that social integration is a two-way process, where immigrants need to rely on the development of a feeling of belonging to the host society; on the other hand, native people also have the role of accepting immigrants as a member of the society and that

facilitate social integration (Ibid). Ali, Zendo, and Somers (2021) added that the host society has a responsibility to help refugee immigrants develop a sense of belonging to their new

society to integrate better. Therefore, the literature highlights that establishing a social network is essential for integration and society.

The foundation of social capital is the establishment of social networks and social relations among individuals and groups. Social capital is a feature of social organization, such as networks, norms, and social trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit (Putnam,1994, p.5). More briefly, social capital can substitute for human capital, where information is acquired informally through connection and skills picked up. It means that the more refugee immigrants extend their network in the receiving society, the more they have access to advantages such as entering employment, improving their language, and other activities promoting integration. Several research studies indicate that, as time goes on, refugees gradually extend their social relations in the host society through friendship, school, neighborhoods, voluntary social work, and starting work. According to Valenta (2008), the labor market is crucial for adding links to the host society; those who do not work sometimes isolate themselves. However, researchers identified different types of social relations between immigrants and other groups. Putnam (2000) defines the relationship between a homogenous group, which links with a similar group of people (among other families, ethnicities, and so on), and heterogeneous groups, which ties with dissimilar or two different ethnic groups or others. It is very easy to establish social bonding with a similar group of origins as the culture, norms, and other ethnic values are similar.

On the other hand, it is often challenging to establish inter-ethnic relations with the natives, where creating a relationship with native facilitate refugee integration, particularly in the job market. Gericke et al. (2018) showed an example –In Germany, refugees rely on their bonding to a similar origin, which makes them find low-skilled jobs and sometimes unemployment. Similarly, Badwi, Ablo, and Overa (2018) found that in Bergen, Ghanaians, those who rely on bonding face more obstacles to finding their job, but those who bond with the native Norwegian end up in the relevant jobs.

Cultural approaches are also essential in integrating refugee immigrants into host societies, as social interaction establishes social capital. Ali, Zendo, and Somers (2021) showed in their study that access to the Canadian border for Syrian refugee families was possible because of Canadian sponsors. Through bonding, they succeed in social ties with those with the same language and culture. However, immigrant refugees integrate into the host society by learning the language and cultural values of the host societies. According to Adler Zawhlen,

Nagel&Schlesinger,2018, p.27) Immigrants have social or cultural ties both with the host societies and the society of origin; therefore, social integration can be understood as a synonym of bicultural integration, even as a process of exchange and reciprocal concept.

The negative impact of social networks on the host society is also emphasized in some studies. Sometimes, the experience of refugees with natives hinders the interest in achieving social capital. For example, Valenta (2008) explains that immigrants face workplace discrimination (whether it is about salary or respect for age differences) not only in Norway but also in other immigrant-receiving country. Lamba (2008) also indicated that only the social network with immigrants' family and close friends has yet to help them find appropriate jobs in Canada.

On the other hand, there are some argumentative associations between social capital and the integration process of migration refugees in the labor market. Some researchers significantly impact human capital's language proficiency to acquire employment status and income to social capital (Gericke et al., 2018). Other researchers have emphasized social bonding; social capital can ensure migrant refugees employment and housing (Cheung & Phillimore, 2017), boosting economic integration (Gericke et al., 2018).

Chapter Three- Methodology

3.1 Introduction:

In this chapter, I will explain the chosen methodology for my research. First, I focus on explaining the research design and strategy. Second, I present the part of the data collection method, data analysis, and sampling methods. Finally, I will discuss the research ethics and the challenges faced during data collection.

3.2 Research Method:

The integration process for refugees has always been challenging for researchers to find adequate answers. I was interested in the labor market integration experience of female refugee immigrants under the human and social capital theoretical framework, primarily depending on the participant's perspective of the problem. To find out the possible appropriate answer, I applied qualitative research for this project. According to Bryman (2012), qualitative research allows researchers to study and understand people's daily lives and what they think about them in many different circumstances. I found this method appropriate to this project, as my concern is to study and understand the experience in terms of challenges and difficulties refugee women face after arriving in the Kristiansand municipality.

In choosing the qualitative method for this study, I envision an in-depth interview in a semi-structured style, as it allows me to create an exchange ground to explore the ideas and perspectives of refugee women's social and economic integration and to enable them to interpret the questions broadly as I chose open-ended question as suggested by (O'Reilly, 2012).

Bryman (2012) also notes that rather than numbers, as is the case with quantitative research, qualitative research emphasizes work meaning and understanding (p.374). Yin (2016,p.3) considers qualitative research a challenge for the researchers and adds three objectives, methodology, transparency, and evidence, to collect original data. In addition to this, in

qualitative research, researchers have a scope to study and understand the daily life challenges of the participants and the experiences they face in many circumstances (Ibid). My research objective was also to understand refugee women's everyday challenges while settling in a new society. That is why I found the qualitative research method appropriate for my paper.

3.3 Research Design:

According to Yin (2016), the "research design is a logical sequence that links the empirical data to the initial research question of the study ."Bryman (2012) defines a *research design* as providing a data collection and analysis framework. It is essential to design the research in a structured and systematic way. Therefore, researchers should be able to state the problem and find the answer to what they expect. There are many types of research design; among them, in the context of this project, I considered phenomenology as a research design. Phenomenology allows us to explain what, why, and how. In this paper, we need to know immigrants' and refugees' ways of thinking and experiencing and their feelings about their new life in Norway (Kristiansand). This is why this design is appropriate for the paper.

In qualitative research, phenomenology design describes the individuals who have experienced the related phenomenon. The design is more open-ended to encourage the participants to share their experiences according to their phenomenon. The main goal of the phenomenological research method is to find in-depth information from participants (Makunika,n.d.).

3.4 Research Strategies:

A research strategy means the general orientation to the conduct of social research (Bryman, 2012,p.35). Social science research has two main epistemological approaches: induction and deduction (Bryman, 2012). I applied an inductive approach

that shaped this project's research strategy by choosing qualitative research. However, there are no specific rules for this. Inductive approaches are associated with qualitative research, thus emphasizing the generation of theories (Bryman, 2012, pp. 32-33). Though the inductive approach is the principal strategic point of this work, while the deductive approach also plays an essential role in this thesis in this sense, I applied the deduction approach in the part of theoretical consideration through the literature review, a question of benchmark compared to what has already done in this field of research. Although the inductive approach is the main style of this work, the deductive approach also plays an essential role in comparing empirical data to pre-existing literature reviews. As Bryman (2012) states, induction, and deduction are two interconnected approaches. In the induction strategy, there is a minimum deduction, in the same way the deduction includes an element of induction (Ibid).

3.5 Sampling Methods:

Sampling the participants is another crucial component of the research methodology. According to Bryman (2012), it is impossible or challenging to interview every individual in a target group. I employed a combination of the two most used sampling methods, purposive and snowball sampling. Bryman (2012,p.427) explained that using mixed sampling approaches is a widespread practice to find the right target population. While working at a private organization, I met some of my target group individuals, and those target people also belong to my target municipality, Kristiansand. Other participants were chosen by a snowballing method when I was introduced to more female refugee immigrants. These two sampling methods helped me identify and reach all informants to collect data. Collecting data from female refugee immigrants was difficult, but the purposive sampling technique helped me manage this target. Another sampling method, the snowball sampling technique, helped me reach my target sample size; I interviewed first immigrants and connected me to others with similar characteristics and experiences.

3.6 Data collection methods:

Bryman (2016,p.10) asserted that data collection is the central point and the most crucial step of any research project; he also emphasizes the relevance of the data

collection as a critical criterion to answer the research questions. There are several data collection techniques depending on the research project, whether it is quantitative or qualitative research method (Bryman,2016). Within this thesis's farm work, I chose a semi-structured interview to understand the research better. I prefer open-ended questions in a semi-structured interview because they are often accompanied by "why" or "how." Semi-structured interviews help researchers bring in-depth output and thoroughly explore the ideas with the participants. It first allows the researchers to fully explore the ideas with the participants and then obtain fixed answers for specific other criteria (O'Reilly, 2012, p. 120). This method also helps me know the participant's independent thoughts about their integration and impact on daily life.

Moreover, the open-ended questions made the interview more flexible. They gave me more opportunities to ask additional questions when I needed to the participants, follow up on questions, and clear their misunderstandings where they needed it. Bryman (2012) also explained that semi-structured interviews guide the researchers and help the data narrative within the study context.

I interviewed ten non-Western female refugees, between 25 and 55 years old, from different countries, such as Eritreans, Somalian, Syrian, and Palestinian. It is essential to address that I carried out my data collection by applying an in-depth semi-structured style. I also added one contract person (NAV) of refugees under the introduction program.

3.7 Data Analysis:

A fundamental principle of qualitative research is data analysis. This allows the researchers to focus on the interview and the observation of it. Therefore, data analysis is bringing the collected data in order and structurally. There are many ways through which an interview can be analyzed. While working through the different ways of analyzing a conversation, it is essential to remember that the analysis of an interview needs to be carried out ethically. The reason for this is that the interviewee is not aware of the person who is going to be analyzing

their answers, so to ensure that they do not feel uncomfortable with what they have interpreted from what they have said and how they say it, they must analyze while taking into consideration their feeling and reactions to what one is doing. (Subbarao,2019).

I chose the thematic and coding analysis method to analyze my empirical data. According to Bryman (2012), coding is the practical starting point for data analysis in qualitative data analysis. It allowed me to learn my transcripts in detail to identify the relevant themes to this study. Thematic analysis not only allows accessibility but also flexibility when analyzing data. The thematic analysis method allows me to explore the various aspects of my research subject. Applying these methods happened in several stages, as follows-

First, the interview responses were transcribed with all details and information related to the research questions. Then, they read the transcriptions line by line; after that, I familiarized myself with the gathered information, as recommended by Bryman (2012).In the next stage, I highlighted the key features of the responses by reading and considering each line of transcriptions. While the interviews were conducted in English as a second language for both the interviewer and the interviewees, understanding the participants' points was time-consuming.

In the coding process, I faced many exciting and essential codes; some were similar, some were repeated, and a few were opposite. After finishing coding, I tried to put all the similar code on one side and the opposite in the other categories.

In this analysis stage, I had several themes; by deeply reviewing the collected data, I combined main themes from all codes and sub-themes, including education, language fluency, social networking, cultures, and strategies for integration.

In the last stage, I should first reread all my data to ensure myself about the themes and all my data. I stopped when I found several themes. As Braun and Clark (2006) pointed out, coding is a never-ending process. In the end, part was to write and analyze the results, and the analytical review was conducted to ensure a clear relation between the responses and themes.

3.8 Ethical Considerations:

O'Reilly (2012) indicated that ethical questions often arise when conducting qualitative research; therefore, it is necessary to address this. Several qualitative researchers have argued that ethical consideration is essential in social science; Bryman (2012) also insists on the fact of ethical questions during social research.

According to UIA (University of Agder) ethical guidelines, developing trust, avoiding misbehavior, focusing on data protection, and respecting participants' ethical values. As my research participants were from vulnerable groups and refugee integration is a sensitive topic, my total concentration was on the above guidelines.

Before collecting personal data, the University of Agder requires permission from the Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD). NSD notified me of the approval of my research proposal and

personal data collection before collecting data. I started my interview when my participants decided on their own time and place for their interview. First, I introduced myself, briefed the reason behind their interview, and made sure to start the interview questions when they felt free and interested to answer. Participants were the main focus of my research; I needed to show respect and consideration to the participants before, during, and even after the interview. The context of this research informed me that refugees' cases are sensitive, where they have given their experience and related it to their personal feelings. Therefore, I was obligated and responsible for protecting participants from any harm during the interview. Additionally, I ensured their privacy, only stored the data briefly, and used the university's one-drive.

It took several days to conduct the interview process as I wanted a fresh feeling during the interview and to be clear about passing on any information. Throughout my research, I was fully aware of the above highlights of legal, ethical, and regulatory issues.

3.9 Research challenges:

Language was one of the main challenges for me. Some participants were not good at expressing their feelings in English, and I was terrible at speaking Norwegian. I had to get the help of a translator to overcome this problem. I also needed help in reading the Norwegian article on refugee integration. Therefore, I only read English-published books and articles. When I interviewed some Muslim female refugees, sometimes they felt hesitant to express their feelings, and different cultural diversity was another challenge for me. Based on their understanding and background, I had to modify and apply my interview conduct.

Chapter Four: Empirical Finding

4.1 Introduction:

This research examines the daily difficulties and challenges female refugee immigrants face after introducing the program in the Municipality of Kristiansand. Here, the research aims to understand the limitation of refugee women's access to the labor market of Kristiansand Municipality. The study explores the most influential factors of integration programs for non-western immigrants in terms of human capital and social capital. As the previous chapter (Chapter Three) mentioned, this study is qualitative; the primary data was collected through

semi-structured interviews. The study included ten interviewers, and all of them were from different non-western countries. All ten interviews were transcribed and analyzed by using thematic analysis methods. Because of the participants' safety and privacy, the findings are fully anonymous without any direct or indirect recognizable names.

This study is based on the following research questions –

1. How does human capital increase the job opportunities for female refugees?
2. What is the role of social capital in resisting employment opportunities for female refugees?

As addressed before, this chapter is built on this study's main findings through semi-structured interviews. The gathered data are analyzed and categorized with other themes and sub-themes of refugees' human and social capital. Also, related information on participants' responses may help find the answer to the research question.

4.2 Human capital:

In chapter two, I mentioned that human capital is the central pillar of refugee integration. Along with this, education and skills are the two focuses of human capital, also considered the primary significance of entering the job market. In the case of labor integration of refugees in Kristiansand, barriers related to refugees' human capital are a theme that emerged from different sub-themes. Sub-themes are –Educational background/skills, language knowledge, and experience.

4.2.1 Educational background:

Education participation is a luxury need for most of the population in most non-western countries. Because of poverty, many people, especially women, do not complete their studies. One Eritrean participant said, "I was in primary school when my father died; it was difficult for my mother to bear me and my sibling's school fees. I could not continue my studies and had no choice; my mother needed my support to open a small business (selling vegetables) in the small marketplace. That is why I quit....and that is how my life changed.

Beyond poverty, most refugee informants brief me about their poor environmental situation; war makes them feel insecure, even forcing them to flee their own countries. In this situation, acquiring primary education is like a nightmare for them.

One female informant from Somalia attested, "Due to the war, I did not get the chance to complete my secondary school. I was not so lucky to continue my further study in the transit country- Kenya until I arrived in Norway."

When refugees flee their country, most go to the transit countries camp before being resettled in a Western country to ensure their protection; then they think about education. A female Congolese refugee asserted, "

In Congo, I completed my secondary school, but then I stopped my studies because of the war; my family flew to Uganda in the refugee camp...there, I tried to continue my studies again, but it was too late, and it was time to flee to Norway."

When refugees flee to transit countries, they lose everything. On the other hand, poverty and other living difficulties stop them from thinking about their education. Some parents have no option but to send their children to school, where food is unavailable. A Syrian female refugee said, "

My whole family was kicked out of our homeland, Syria, because of my father's political involvement. I completed secondary school in Syria, but when we moved to Turkey, it was difficult for my parents to send me to college ("

With deep regret, in terms of accessing opportunities such as the acquisition of human capital and the labor market in the host country, one of the informants said, "I arrived in Norway without any educational background since I cannot read or write it hard to find a job." On the other hand, one of participants said she had a complete study background from her country of origin. She added, "I come from my country [Turkey] with a bachelor's degree in business administration, which helped me a lot to integrate here [Norway] because it was easy for me to understand the system and to take further initiatives like going to an introduction program and seeking a job"). This illustrates that female immigrants are not a homogenous group and that their educational background varies. The employee from NAV, working with the integration of refugees, confirmed the differences in the educational background: Those immigrants come here (Norway) with education from their country of origin, which is

essential for them. Because educated immigrant refugees adopt our system easily and the introduction program quickly...even those with a high level of education do not need much help from us; they manage to search for a job themselves."

However, while the education acquired by refugees in their country of origin facilitates their integration in terms of acquiring human capital and understanding the host country's system, they still need to find relevant jobs. According to the experience of the official informant in the introduction program, "Refugees who come with a higher education find it difficult to enter the labor market using their diplomas from their countries of origin." An assertion that he justified in the following way:

For those who come with higher education, employers say they do not have a place. They question their countries of origin before even trying them; they think it is not enough".

4.2.2 Approval of educational documents for refugees in Norway:

The question of Approval of educational documents in Norway concerns the highly educated refugees. Two of the informants have university degrees from their country of origin. However, finding a relevant job in Norway is another barrier to integration. One female Eritrean refugee informant strongly asserted these points: "When I arrived in Norway, I had a bachelor's degree in economics; I applied for a hundred jobs but did not get any positive response." Another female refugee from Turkey added, "I came here [Norway] with my bachelor's degree in business administration. I found a small job that was not related to my field. I want to apply for a master's program for better job opportunities. I must send all my documents to NOKUT (the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education) for accreditation. It takes a long time to declare their decision ."

Immigrants, particularly non-western refugees, require NOKUT approval for a university diploma or if someone (immigrant refugee) is interested in finding a study-related job. During the introduction program, educated participants who desire to approve their documents from NOKUT for their further job query all the information provided by the introduction program officials, addressed by one Syrian refugee woman.

However, obtaining approval for their academic documents from their country of origin does not mean they quickly get access to the job market. One female refugee from Eritrea said, "It

took a year after I submitted all my documents for Approval in NOKUT. After a long waiting period, I thought I would manage a job easily, but I was wrong; it did not help me to get a job." Other Iraqi participants said she had her university degree and work experience from her own country, Iraq. Nevertheless, "NOKUT did not grant my documents because NOKUT does not allow any Iraqi certificates."

After getting Approval from NOKUT, refugees still need to be accepted in the labor market. In very few cases, they obtain their desired job. They cannot generally find full-time jobs; they must study more in the Norwegian curriculum.

4.2.3: Education in Norway:

All participants asserted that in Norway, with education, integration into the labor market is easier once obtaining at least a high school diploma boosts their employment chances in Norway. A female refugee from Sudan added, "Before finishing my high school diploma, I got rejected from many job offers. However, finishing my school diploma helped me find my current job."

The above discussion brief that acquiring a diploma or a degree in Norway keeps refugees in an uncertain situation for accessing the labor market.

One Eritrean refugee woman added, "I changed several jobs as that time I understood I got very few payments compared to my colleagues who have a Norwegian school diploma. Then I decided to study.... what helped me to find my new job."

Refugee participants interviewed in this project agree that at least obtaining some form of education facilitates refugees' employment, and without education, finding a job is hard in Norway. One Somali female refugee pointed "If you have an education, you get a hundred percent job in Norway" –

Some informants explain that acquiring educational qualifications in Norway is challenging and time-consuming. A Syrian woman: "In this middle stage of my life, I should have to complete Norwegian education; that was challenging because this field is new for me. Also,

at this stage of my life, I need a quick search job where I spend two years completing my high school degree. It was a waste of time for me."

Like this middle-aged participant, another young participant said, "Though my high school certificate was not accredited, I had to repeat my whole high school journey. I wasted two years...."

Also, another female refugee said the introduction program counselor and her advisor on NAV introduced her to many employers, which helped her find the network and her first job. Furthermore, all the informants agreed that education courses helped them enter the labor market. After finishing the introduction program, the government sends them to field courses according to their interests in the work field as a part-time employee. Even during this time, they received a salary from the government. This opportunity could help them acquire new skills and gain experience, which will help them further in the labor market. One of Somalin's informants said, "After finishing my education course, a company related to my course introduced me through my NAV advisor. First, I got 20 percent employee; after that, when I learned all their criteria, they gave me 70 percent employee".

So, it is highlighted in the interview that the educational background of female refugee immigrants plays the most significant role in their human capital.

4.3 Language Proficiency:

In every municipality, just as in Kristiansand municipality, language is the main engine of social, economic, political, and other administrative activities. Once the refugees are resettled in the municipality, their integration begins with acquiring human capital through learning the Norwegian language. All participants agree that language was the main barrier they faced when they integrated into Norwegian society. A Syrian woman said state; you cannot do anything here in Norway without language". Several also add that entering the job market without language is challenging for them. The NAV official confirmed the importance of learning Norwegian: "Language is the main obstacle that prevents refugee immigrants from finding a suitable job." He added, "When you do not know the language, you do not integrate here (in Norway) because you can not function in the workplace."

That is why, among introduction programs, language learning is the most common course for refugees and immigrants. Even in the post-introduction, when refugees want to access education as well as the employment sector, a female Eritean said, "Since I arrived in Kristiansand, I have been struggling with the Norwegian language; here, language comes first."

However, this language program primarily aims to communicate, study and work. Also, language facilitates the social integration between the immigrants and the natives. One of

the female Syrian participants said- "I know Norwegian, but sometimes my colleagues and neighbors made the language more difficult for me; they talked in other dialects. I needed clarification then." The pronunciation and the use of certain words are different in different parts of Norway. For example, the way of speaking in Kristiansand differs from those who live in Oslo or elsewhere. Although it is the same language, Norwegian is expressed in different dialects.

One of the middle-aged participants added, "The Norwegian language is complex for me to learn; on the other hand, at this stage of my life, learning a new language is challenging for me." Another participant said, "They want young people with good Norwegian language skills; what about us then (she meant the old person)," The NAV official said some national criterion stages of language learning are as follows: A1 is for the beginners, In the A2 level, participants can communicate, and the B1 and B2 levels are the advanced levels; in this level, participants can study or work. So, reaching any of these levels varies from person to person, depending on their ability and necessity. Mastering the language depends on several things, such as age, low level of education, and even mental health.

However, the lower educational quality and age limit creates enormous difficulties in mastering the Norwegian language. During the interview, one of the young participants also confessed her opinion towards language, "I know Norwegian, but still, I am feeling nervous when I go to any job interview; I am confused, would I say good Norwegian, is it perfect, I was always in a dilemma in my mind." Another informant stated, "Me and my husband wanted to open a restaurant in Kristiansand city, because of our poor language level we could not open it....."

Regarding other barriers, language itself solves many problems for refugee immigrants.

4.3 Social capital:

During my thematic analysis, the most underlining theme was refugees' access to the labor market through social integration. According to my participants, social integration is complex after introducing the program in Kristiansand municipality. The thematic concept will be described below in four parts for better understanding. The first part discusses the importance of establishing social capital with the natives and other immigrants for finding jobs; the second discusses refugee integration in the labor market; the third discusses the integration strategies in social capital; and finally, the barriers to integration.

4.3.1 Establishing social networking and labor market

According to informants establishing a social network is more challenging for informants, as it plays a vital role in the municipality of Kristiansand. A Turkish female refugee expressed: "If you need a job here (Kristiansand), you have to find friends or establish your social network; otherwise, finding a job is very difficult ."The social network is the central concept in integrating refugees and creating other opportunities refugees need when they enter the host country like Norway. Among all of them, my informants pointed out mostly the finding jobs.

During the interview sessions, I observed that half of my participants said they found their first job in Kristiansand either through their same country's friend or another known person they met in this municipality. They even enter the job market faster than the other participants who got their first job by themselves and their knowledge.

One of Afghanistan's female participants attested, "I got my first job in Kristiansand three weeks after my arrival. One of my friends, who already worked in a Butik, introduced me to her boss, and after some days, I called for the job."

Another Syrian participant shared the same story: "I found my first job in the cleaning field after some weeks of arriving through my friends from the introduction program. However, after that, it was difficult for me to find when I tried the same jobs in my field at that time."

To increase the chances of finding a job, all refugee immigrants expressed the need to establish a social network with native Norwegians. One Eritrean participant added, "Native Norwegians do not trust refugee immigrants, and the native owners do not give a full-time job contract if you are an immigrant."

My officials' informants said, "Kristiansand is a small city, everyone (native) knows each other, they do not want to be others (refugee immigrants) reference. But without reference here finding a job is quite challenging".

Unfortunately, many refugees struggle to establish social networks in Kristiansand- added Somalian female participants. Many of my participants said, "If you do not know someone here (Kristiansand), you can't access a job. They also agreed that regardless of your educational degree or other work experience.

Turkish female informant said, "The employer received your CV very dearly, but they never call you back ...I have several experiences... least you need to know someone to get an interview call."However, it isn't easy to establish a Norwegian friend: The Palestine female refugee said, "If they (native Norwegian) do not know you, they smile at you, nothing else If you are not putting forward the conversion ahead. In this case, friendship is a nightmare for us".

Another Syrian female refugee said, "My husband has many Norwegian colleagues and friends as he works outside, but as a woman, I take care of my family and stay at home; that is why I cannot interact with Norwegian." Therefore, female informants argue that there are many difficulties, thus creating obstacles to spreading social network between them and natives, which hinders their integration and finding jobs."

A Female refugee from Syria said, "For living, you need food, and for food, you need a job. My job is all here in Kristiansand municipality". A woman from Turkey expressed: "What is difficult for me to live in Kristiansand is to find a job."

A female refugee from Congo said that the number of refugee immigrants has increased, but the number of jobs has stayed the same here in Kristiansand. Another Syrian female refugee said, "I think the position is better than before because many immigrants have opened their businesses here, and they help newcomers find jobs." A female from Iraq pointed to the limited opportunities in Kristiansand: "If you are mastering the Norwegian language, then

also sometimes you are unable to find a job in Kristiansand Municipality because many immigrants live here in a small area ."This was shared by another of the participants, who said that "it is difficult to find a job in Kristiansand because it is a small town compared to another city like Oslo, Bergen, or Stavanger. There is a lack of jobs here, which makes life more difficult for refugee immigrant who is the only earner in a family". She added, "As a female, sometimes you would not get many jobs. They received your CV but do not allow you in many fields because you are a woman".

All informants who participated in this research underline that accessing employment in a Municipality is an essential factor that promotes integration.

4.3.2 Socio-cultural effects on integration:

A Syrian refugee pointed to the historical change in diversity and number of immigrants to the region: "I came here in Kristiansand (Norway) almost 15 years ago; there were not many immigrants like now"). Kristiansand has experienced huge diversity for the last few decades. The NAV official confirms this: "Kristiansand is a municipality that welcomed many immigrants." After the introduction program, when refugee immigrants explore themselves in different sectors, sociocultural factors influence them, as pointed out by informants.

Most refugee respondents expressed the difficulties of interacting with native Norwegians. One Eritrean asserted the relationship and cultural differences between them and natives: "Without building a relationship with the native, how do we know their cultures properly?". One Turkish female refugee said, " I had one neighbor before; she never greets my family. We always invite the lady during our festive. She did not, but in my country, we think a neighbor is like our guardian."

Some female participants asserted that -Norwegians are cold, discouraging the immigrant refugees, but with their involvement, the integration process can succeed. A Palestinian female refugee, "I think it is a matter of culture; employers are reluctant to hire non-western immigrants". She also underlines that" from my experience, I can say employers are willing to hire a Polish or German employee instead of an immigrant from Africa or the Middle. Maybe they think the culture is similar to the Norwegian".

However, according to the informants, The sociocultural factor has negative impacts, which hinder their integration process in Kristiansand municipality. Conversely, some of respondents pointed out that they can learn many things from the native Norwegians, including their norms and cultures. One female participant from Iraq added, "Since I came here in 2012, I learned many things from this small municipality; I know now about the traditional food and dress of Norwegian. "Another Afganisthan respondent said," Sharing adds the value of social-cultural aspects; when I came here (In Norway), my contact person from NAV helped me a lot to learn their culture and norms; whenever I needed him, he always helped me,"

Other Syrian participants underline that Once I went to a voluntary organization with my CV, I met an officer who visited my home country. After our meeting, we talked a lot about our food, culture, and so many things. The best thing from then was he became the reference person who helped me find my relevant job ".

4.4 Integration strategies:

My official from NAV and the participants told me about the different strategies the municipality of Kristiansand applied to facilitate integration into the society and the particular labor market. These strategies include learning the language, practicing, developing skills, and social connections. Along with this, there are some other personal strategies that my participants added, according to their opinions, to make their integration process more accessible in the host community.

The introductory program connects most refugees with social groups or friends from their home countries. Participants asserted that to improve their social network, the Norwegian government has yet to take any special steps. Many refugee immigrants have problems connecting with new friends or communicating with native Norwegians. Participants also stated that most of the friends they made came from their home countries or had the same cultural background. An Eritrean female refugee discussed the language and culture they shared in their same community.

"I made a friend; she is also from Eretria. We speak the same language and share the same culture. It has been seven years, and we are still friends and have a good connection with another immigrant. She also added that together, they participate in many activities".

As mentioned in the human capital concept, language knowledge is the first step and key to integrating into a new society. However, some immigrants argue that learning and speaking the Norwegian language helps improve social networks and acceptance in Norwegian society. However, learning a new language is not easy for them, especially for my elderly participants. It is clear from the participants' opinions that to base the social network their self-efforts only work on. Moreover, they may want to apply for a job with their experience and documents. In that case, they will face some barriers related to education, validity, and a time-consuming process (discussed in previous points). Otherwise, if they can find a job with all the barriers, they also need good social connections. However, they also believe that relative education or vocational training affects their job or benefits from a higher salary than people with only social connections and without relative education.

A Somali female refugee underlined the value of immigrating with the family and how it helped her in the integration program, especially in learning the language. She said, "My husband helped me learn the Norwegian language as he was coming before me here (in Norway), so he was fluent in the local language, thus helping me learn the language as well as many social norms."

On the other hand, one Syrian refugee woman said the opposite; she said, "As a woman, I need to do all the household chores and maintain my four kids. In this situation, learning a language is an extra burden for me. Even I know I could not make a new friend in Norwegian society without this."

One of the Palestinian female refugees said, "Non-governmental organizations help us to integrate into new society by organizing various events such as tea/coffee parties and language clubs. It is helpful for us (immigrants). She added, "The number of people working for this type of organization needs to increase because the number of refugees is increasing daily; to tackle this situation needs more employees."

Most of the immigrant believe that the introduction program had a significant influence on their integration process into a new society. When they arrived in Norway, they faced numerous problems. After finishing the introduction program, they found all the way out individually whether the problem was personal or professional. One of my young female refugees opines, "I always try to catch the word my classmate delivered and attend the festivals and parties organized by my Norwegian classmate. Initially, these policies allowed me to learn their culture, norms, and language". One Palestinian refugee added-"When I was

new in Kristiansand, most of my colleagues were Norwegian. At that time, I learned the law or system followed by the municipality. This may help me find the primary solution for my daily life and my integration process".

Another Syrian female refugee shared her strategy in a line," My daughter reads in a Norwegian school. I always try to check her school book, which helps me learn about the new society."

Most of respondents agree that their friends from their origin always meet each other and discuss the rules and regulations of Norwegian society, mainly about the recommended municipality. They even added that they always welcome new immigrant members who face the integration problem they faced before. They also believe it helps them and the new members in the initial stage. The NAV official agreed on the above points. He said, "I see many immigrants who initially follow some strategies which they borrow from other immigrants who have already settled in the host society. I think new refugee immigrants can trust their like-minded people (maybe from their land or other non-western immigrants) than natives in the first stage " .

4.5 Integration Barriers:

Apart from all the advantages of the integration program we discussed above, participants also addressed some drawbacks they faced during the integration process.

The learning process, for example, is long- "The course is very time-consuming, and they are not concerned about what your past educational qualification is. They design the course plan for the educated people, I believe" (one Syrian woman). Another participant added, "Language courses mixed several types of educational background people. Where one can understand the process very fastly, other can very slowly" (A Somalian refugee woman).

One Eritrean woman said, "Language courses are too long and waste our time. And the homework they give is too much press for a day; we do not get proper time to finish our tasks. Sometimes we are frustrated and need to motivate ourselves, but unfortunately, there is no system in the school for motivation for the students."

Some participants stated that they find Christians and native people more introverted as they cannot communicate with the other immigrants properly. One of the interviewers from

Turkey said, "I am an extrovert who likes to meet new people and loves to explore a new society. When I came to Kristiansand, most people I met were always busy with themselves or the Gadgets. They do not want to say extra words except Hi and Bye. So, it is tough for me to make new friends in a new community."

The interview shows that some of my educated participants want to change their position in Norway. They said professions from their homeland, like Medicine and teaching, are refused to offer the same position in Norway. On the other hand, what they offer, such as a restaurant or Butik job, they want to avoid joining. Again, the refugee immigrant needs to join the school or university to prove themselves.

The other barrier to refugee integration, I found during the interview, is that immigrants come from different countries and cultures, so they need help to adapt to an unfamiliar environment and culture. It also affects their mental health and integration process, like learning a new language, making new friends, etc.

However, as the participants portrayed in this chapter, their experience and difficulties throughout their integration process as a new member in Norway. We found a general idea about their integration barriers and what affected them entering the labor market. Also, the main barriers to integration were described. The gathered data in this chapter will be discussed and analyzed in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Analysis

5.1 Introduction:

In this chapter, I elaborate on the research questions on how the human capital factor impacts refugees' integration into the labor market. Along with this is social capital's role in securing employment opportunities for female refugees in Kristiansand Municipality. I discuss the challenges they faced after their introduction program and the strategies they followed for their integration that my informants highlighted in the last chapter (Chapter Four- empirical Findings). The discussion is much more focused on the factors that limit refugee women's access to the job market after the program's introduction into the Kristiansand Municipality. This work is on qualitative data where the interviewer told a general story of their life, which gives us a deeper understanding of their experience and strategies in integration. Based on the inductive approach to collecting empirical data, I conducted a thematic analysis, and the framework led to four main themes in analytical views of the findings following. The central theme focuses on human capital, social capital, integration limitations, and the strategic integration process. Furthermore, the research question will be answered at the end of all related discussions.

5.2 Human capital theory of refugee immigrants:

Human capital is very demanding in integrating refugees, where language, education, professional training, and other skills are essential, especially when immigrants want to enter the labor market. The literature review (Chapter Two) highlights that human capital is a significant challenge when refugees seek to integrate into a host society and access opportunities. According to

findings, human capital is difficult to acquire, especially for non-western immigrants. In the literature, Djuve and Kavli (2018) argue that human capital is only sometimes transferable across borders. However, based on my research question of how human capital impacts refugees' integration into the job market, the participants pointed out in empirical findings that those with university degrees also need to acquire Norwegian human capital. Based on

empirical results and the literature, Hayfron (2001) suggested that despite their best effort to learn the Norwegian language and acquire education and other skills, they still need help finding a relevant job.

The refugees' educational background significantly impacts their human capital when in Norway. According to empirical findings, most female refugee informants did not complete high school in their land because of poverty, war, or gender issues. Most non-Western female refugees arrived in Norway with a low level of education; however, empirical findings and literature show that female refugees, both with low and prominent levels of education, acquire Norwegian human capital as early as possible. Badwi et al. (2018) stated that in Norway, highly-educated refugees acquired human capital faster than the low-educated refugees. On the other hand, some informants argue that if they have a university degree from their country of origin, in Norway, it is not taken for granted; however, the employers doubt the level of education that the refugees acquire from their country of origin. Unfortunately, employers prioritize those with vocational training from any Norwegian instruction rather than any general degree from a university (Djuve & Kavli, 2018), so it is understandable why even most qualified refugees struggle to find a job in the Kristiansand Municipality.

Though approving refugee immigrants in a school system is a good initiative, approving school documents takes more work in Norway. The empirical findings and Abamosa (2021) also agree that the process of approval documents is very demanding, especially for non-western immigrants. It is a very costly process, which takes time and many documents. Furthermore, informants confirm that when it comes to the question of the approval of school documents in Norway, they only consider educated refugee immigrants and accept their past school documents. Educated immigrants with difficulty finding their documents must join high school again to find a job. As Friberg and Midtboen (2018) mentioned in the literature, refugees are lagging in higher degrees and getting involved in low-paid employment because of the need for more documents. Although who can manage their documentation, despite the challenges mentioned, my empirical findings pointed out that even then, some female refugees needed help finding a job in Kristiansand Municipality. As a result, some educated refugee immigrants are demotivated and become unemployed.

The essential role of education or other skills or training can facilitate the job opportunities of refugees in the host community. In the literature by Lamba (2008), there is a correlation between new education and job opportunities in Canada. Empirical findings confirm that

refugees benefit from free studies during the introductory program. After this program, those who want to continue their studies apply for scholarships or loans. This helps their better integration by finding relevant jobs. However, many female refugees still need help getting into the job market. The scenario is for the elderly refugees, according to my findings. Djuve and Kavi (2018) also point out that some refugees still prefer to stay at home rather than go outside to seek jobs because some think that even though they have an educational degree, the salary structure is still different from their Western immigrants or natives. This fact happened, according to Hardoy and Schone (2014); even after Norwegian authorities approved non-western educational documents, employers also considered them insufficient and less qualified. According to findings, for newcomers, mainly for the youth, education is a suitable investment for a better life.

Language proficiency is considered the first condition for refugee integration into Norwegian society, confirmed by informants, particularly in Kristiansand Municipality's labor market. Djuve and Kavil (2018) assert that those mastering the host country's language enter the labor market. Likewise, much other literature also focused on the importance of mastering the host country's language for better integration (Bloch,2007; Joyce,2019; Zwysan, 2019). According to findings, refugee immigrants may find a job but still need their salary due to a lack of language proficiency. The findings of this study indicate that knowledge of the Norwegian language is a vital factor in becoming acquainted with Norwegian society, as some participants called it "the key to labor integration. "

Informants also asserted that the Norwegian language sometimes guarantees you find a relevant job. Hyforn (2001) also pointed out that language is vital in the integration process, but language is a must-have component in the labor market, especially for reasonable wages. According to empirical findings, middle-aged refugee immigrants and less-educated female refugees faced challenges learning a new language and entering the labor market.

On the other hand, informants also confessed that most employers want a prominent level of Norwegian fluency and good writing and reading skills. These approaches are difficult for female refugee immigrants. Refugees faced dialect problems in the workplace and neighborhood despite their language proficiency. The dialects of Norwegian, often practiced by natives of different regions of the country, contain words that are not regularly used in the official language. The refugees only speak the official Norwegian "Bokmal," which they learn in the introduction program. Through language fluency, female refugees find self-

confidence, build trust to find jobs, continue education, and make a good life. To conclude, language proficiency is essential for better integration in Kristiansand Municipality but poses significant challenges.

5.3. Social integration of refugees:

Social capital is one of the most significant and critical skills for successful refugee immigration. This factor also considerably influences the entire labor market (Uekusa, 2020). According to participants, social capital influences not only their economic integration but also their daily life experiences. This situation might recover by gaining a job and earning as well as being able to find like-minded people in a new society. So, it is clear why social capital is essential for a female refugee to shape their personal life and economic balance.

Social capital includes social networks and relations among people in a new society, leading them to enter the job market. After the program's introduction, the main obstacles to their integration into the labor market were in Kristiansand municipality.

This research and literature show that having a proper social network can help female immigrants get their first and well-paid jobs (Mishra,2020). However, establishing social capital and making good connections in a new community is complex and multidimensional. Because making and building a social network to enter the labor market requires local language skills, learning a new language is time-consuming for refugee immigrants. This research paper indicates that in Kristiansand, female refugees are willing to make social capital among their origin, which Putnum (2000) calls social bonding. This, however, allows them to find their first job in the following municipality, but immigrants face discrimination in the workplace (M.Valenta,2008).

Informants agreed on the point; thus, Lamba (2008) also indicates in the literature (in the case of Canada) that only connection with family members and close friends has yet to help find the desired relevant jobs.

However, many female refugees and often middle-aged females failed to establish social capital with native Norwegians. My findings outline, and Lamba(2008) asserted that due to the lack of trust towards non-Western immigrants and due to the responsibility towards family or other household chores, female refugees failed to make a good connection with

natives. Moreover, to benefit from social capital, making relations with natives is essential as they know all the rules and requirements of their society. It can be understood from the findings that newcomer female refugees faced more hardship in making a social connection to the natives, as at that time, they were culturally unknown to the customs and norms.

Although Kristiansand has been known as a municipality for the last few decades, refugees still face sociocultural challenges during their integration. In Kristiansand, participants said natives have significantly less connection to non-Western immigrants, and natives live in restricted social circles. The findings of the study underline that because of the limited nature of native Norwegians, female refugee immigrants prevent them from establishing a social network. However, my findings state that female refugees hide themselves to explore the natives. For that, refugee immigrants deprived them of establishing a social network and made the job market particular for female refugees, thus hindering their integration into society.

Language skills are the factor that affects both human capital and social capital. In the language proficiency part, we discussed how language skills can help female refugee immigrants enter the job market. Many difficulties hinder achieving social capital, but language skills are the most important one. Gericke et al. (2018) showed that it significantly impacts human capital's language proficiency to acquire employment and income to social capital. This paper also showed how some informants, especially elderly refugee women, hide from the native Norwegians because they do not interact with the natives in their language. As a result, female refugees need to catch up with Norwegian language skills. Also, some studies asserted Hayforn (2001); Bawdi et al.(2018) that native language abilities shape the total integration process for female refugees. Along with this, education levels and work experience Becker et al., (2007) add extra facilities to the social capital and diversity of the workplace, positively affecting the immigrants, their earnings, and their employers.

5.4 Integration Strategies:

In the literature part (chapter two), this study presents the Norwegian government's plan or strategies for better immigrant integration. Norway's authority introduced a two-year introduction program for successful integration into Norwegian society. According to my

findings and in the literature, Alamosa et al. (2021) agreed that this program increased the opportunities for refugee immigrants in language, education, and social studies. These components are, however, the main obstacle for refugee immigrants.

Most of the participants of this research are uneducated or significantly less educated, whereas researchers, Joyce (2019), and Hagelund (2005) showed that education is the heart of integration policy. According to the findings, some participants joined Norwegian schools again to achieve a degree that increased their self-confidence and increased their chances in the job market. This policy is the initial strategy for integrating female refugees into education.

Secondly, female refugees face language problems in the new society. According to the respondents, language creates problems in the job market and adds many problems in their daily lives, including establishing a social network and understanding natives' thinking. My findings and literature from Raanaas et al. (2019), and Abraham et al., (2018) underline that language makes the gap between refugee immigrants and natives.

Despite all these indicated barriers, refugee women attend the introduction program. In the primary stage, most of the participants added that they chose their family to practice the Norwegian language after classes. According to informants, they also seek help from their group of people. This is, however, the initial strategies they follow after the introduction program.

When discussing establishing social networks and culture in the host society, this research paper already addresses the importance of this aspect. According to my findings, some governmental and non-governmental organizations help female refugees integrate into the new people in the Kristiansand municipality. On the other hand, the participants prioritize their willingness to learn or adopt the new human and social capital in a new country. According to them, these are the main strategies for resettlement in Norway.

5.5 Questions Answer:

5.5.1

Question 1: How does human capital increase the job opportunities for female refugees?

Some elements in human capital have a profound influence on female refugee integration. The essential elements are the human capital in acquiring education, learning a language, work experience, and skills. Lack of these factors or a low degree of them can reduce immigrant refugees' opportunities to enter the labor market.

Based on my findings, in host countries like Norway, their policy for integration is to acquire education and linguistic skills. In Norway, introduction courses are an excellent example of these policies, which, according to my research results, have been progressive for female refugees in the first place. The collected data in this study and related literature prove the effectiveness of human capital in refugees integrated into the new society. Challenges related to refugees' human capital are more widespread in the small municipalities in Norway. However, much of the literature emphasized the significance of human capital. Norway has a high educational rate and professional skills, so if refugee women improve their human capital, no matter what, they can easily access the job market.

5.5.2

Question 2: What is the role of social capital in resisting employment opportunities for female refugees?

As discussed above, my findings and other studies highlight the importance of the social capital of refugee women in resisting and enhancing their opportunities in a new society. Social capital helps the refugees express their skills and abilities to society; in some cases, social networking in the labor market supports female refugees who do not have higher education. According to empirical findings, sometimes making a good social connection with people from their land or those who speak the same language helped them to find a job for the first time.

Though adapting social capital for immigrant refugees is complicated, they must learn the native language and improve their skills. Then, they can enter the labor market, where making a good social network can also bridge the labor market. To improve the social network, spending some years in the host country and showing interest in the new culture can make good connections with the natives and others. To conclude, social networking while

learning Norwegian language skills and matching to the native norms facilitates opportunities for refugee women and inspires them to do better.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.1 Conclusion:

This thesis has explored the main barriers to female refugees accessing the labor market in the targeted municipality. To lead a better life and for a better future for their children, refugee immigrants flee from their countries to Western countries; integration is, therefore, the way to fulfill the way to host society. This often creates many challenges for them in the host society; this study explores the difficulties and challenges they faced during their integration process. This research tried to answer the research questions by analyzing the gathered data from other relevant studies and collecting information from interviews. The data collection, analysis, and research questions are under two main themes -human and social capital. Then, participants were chosen for the interview under qualitative data collection, using a semi-structured method given the choice of the inductive strategy with a case study of Kristiansand municipality in Norway.

The intent of this study is based on three research questions: factors of human capital impacting refugees' integration, how social capital facilitates the access of immigrant refugees to the labor market, and acquiring human capital and establishing a social network on how refugees follow their initial strategies. The logic is that when refugees are resettled in the municipality, they receive support from the municipality to meet their basic needs while acquiring the human capital in the introduction program to find work in their post-introduction program phase. It was found that after efforts to achieve human capital, social integration through establishing the social network becomes, in most cases, an essential condition in the municipality.

The effectiveness of labor integration policies depends on the participant's human capital to a large extent. Precisely, the level of immigrants' knowledge and education decide the effectiveness of the integration and strategies for them. The introduction program is a good example – this program was beneficial and effective for all refugee immigrants, especially those who did not have education or any other job experience. They can acquire education-required skills during the program, and they enter the labor market. In addition, the study notes that a new integration law extends the duration of the introduction program for refugees who want to complete their secondary education. Since January 2021, the program has motivated refugee immigrants to acquire more human capital and put them in a better position in the labor market. The drawback is the extended period; this is suitable for young immigrants, but middle-aged refugee immigrants cannot take advantage of the course.

The first barrier refugee immigrants face is related to their human capital, i.e., their educational qualification, taking new courses in Norway, and learning the Norwegian language fluency. The accreditation process is time-consuming and demanding; most female refugees need help to meet the requirements. Taking any supplementary courses in Norway depends on the status of female refugees, including past educational background; valid certificates are the essential documents for the courses. In addition, after the program's introduction, highly educated female refugees faced challenges in finding relevant jobs. Within this context, employers think degree acquisition from non-western countries needs to be revised, and the standard does not match the Western level jobs; as a result, they do not hire them. This study suggested that despite all the efforts made by female refugee to acquire their Norwegian human capital, a significant number of them, especially the educated, only sometimes manage the desire for employment. This disappointed and frustrated them, which hindered their integration into the municipality.

Likewise, language fluency is a critical element for female refugees, creating obstacles to accessing employment in the targeted municipality. Despite the effort to master the Norwegian language, it does not always offer relevant jobs to the refugees. Additionally, local dialects, especially in rural municipalities, made language fluency more difficult for refugees who wanted to avoid going to school.

Besides the critical role of the human capital of female refugee in entering the labor market, their social capital also has equal significance in labor integration. Though it is difficult for new immigrants to make social relationships with natives, this research showed that having a good social network with others can be very effective in entering the labor market. Study participants found their first job through their social network in Kristiansand municipality. Results show that both educated and non-educated female refugee immigrants benefited from making good social networking.

Several challenges are also related to social integration that hinder refugees from finding relevant jobs and integrating into the municipality. The limited social network, especially with natives, is one barrier that reduces refugee women's chances of success in the job market. Another reason this study highlights is a lack of trust toward natives or sometimes feeling insecure, which pushes them to make relationships with their group. It is essential to mention that establishing social networking is much more challenging for newcomer refugees, and for the first time, most of the jobs they found were low-paid. After gaining

related education and skills, they found a relevant job, which is also not guaranteed, as confessed by this research.

On the other hand, this research asserted the perception that culturally Norwegians are restricted to their social circles; many refugee immigrants, therefore, find themselves not engaging with the natives. The lack of native language skills and unknown cultural factors force them to do this. Social-cultural factors play another challenge for them, the native Norwegians. However, social networking with natives and strong references on their CVs are challenging to establish. As a result, many consider moving to other big Norwegian cities.

Regarding strategies, the municipality, through NAV, facilitates those still looking for a relevant job in their field. Informants try to make as many social bonds with other immigrants and the natives as possible and participate in many natives' cultural programs. Additionally, spending some years in the targeted municipality and making other policies mentioned by my informants in this research should be added to the existing ones so that female refugees can access relevant employment and integrate actively into the Kristiansand municipality.

6.2 Policy reflection:

Four policy recommendations were selected from this research. These are-

- Based on the research and literature, it is clear that knowing the language is an essential factor for immigrants in accessing the job market and making social networks. Therefore, ensuring that female immigrants get access to the Norwegian language course and acquire a proper language level enhances their chances of getting into the job market.
- The new integration law on extending the duration of the introduction program to enrich the process of human capital should concern all ages of refugee immigrants. According to the participants, this law is only beneficial for young female refugees, but for middle-aged refugees, who are more vulnerable, the law needs to be revised for them. The municipality should give them more time so that they can also make their integration process more accessible.
- Through NAV, the municipality should help the immigrants find their desired jobs after acquiring Norwegian human capital (education and language). According to this research, many refugees need help finding jobs after mastering the language and gaining an education.

- Establishing a social network is essential for all immigrants to find jobs and integrate properly into society. The municipality seeks strategies to encourage ethnic Norwegian participation in many voluntary activities. So that refugee immigrants get a chance to communicate more with the natives. This would also allow them to establish more social networks and the opportunities to integrate more into the municipality, especially in finding jobs.

6.3 Recommendation for further study:

Integration is an extensive field of study. Nowadays, much research on immigrant integration in Norway has been observed. Although I have chosen non-Western female refugees for this research in Norway, the results of this study cannot be generalized to other groups of refugee immigrants. An analysis with only male refugee immigrants or a comparative analysis between male and female refugees would be interesting for further research.

Here, I chose the small municipality of Norway; it would be good to do the same research in the big cities in Norway.

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