

Social Integration of Refugees for Inclusive and Sustainable

Development

Case study in Kristiansand, Norway

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere

ABSTRACT

This master's thesis delves into the social integration of refugees into Norwegian society, with a primary emphasis on promoting inclusive and sustainable development. The research seeks to examine three core research questions using qualitative techniques, including document analysis and interviews with seventeen informants. The study begins with a thorough examination of Norway's integration policies and programmes specifically formulated to assist refugees. It offers a detailed comprehension of the frameworks and initiatives implemented to support their integration process.

Subsequently, the research examines the factors that aid and hinder the refugee integration process for inclusive and sustainable development. Themes under the integration opportunities include language and cultural competence, strong social support systems, employment opportunities, and the Norwegian introduction programme. The study again identified language and cultural barriers, challenging social support systems, lack of employment opportunities and weak social connections as the major challenges that hinder the integration of refugees for inclusive and sustainable development.

Furthermore, the study offers valuable insights into the experiences of refugees in Kristiansand regarding their social integration. It highlights key themes such as the challenges posed by language and cultural differences, the issue of unemployment, the lack of strong social connections, and the presence of emotional and psychological problems. The study provides valuable insights into the integration process of refugees in Kristiansand by documenting their voices and narratives within the local context.

In conclusion, this research enhances our comprehension of the process of refugee integration in Norway and provides practical suggestions for policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders. The study seeks to promote the development of inclusive and sustainable communities in Norway, where refugees can flourish and make positive contributions. This is done by examining both the factors that facilitate this process and the obstacles that need to be overcome.

Key words: Refugees, immigrants, social integration, sustainable development goals, introduction programme, Norway, Kristiansand.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to Bright Baffour Antwi, Ismail Bilan who connected me to a lot of my respondents at the Red Cross in Oslo, to my dad, my late brother who passed away on the 26th of March, 2024, and all my siblings and those who motivated me to achieve a higher academic height.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
DESA	Department of Economic and Social Affairs
EEA	European Economic Area
ECHR.	European Court of Human Right
EU.	European Union
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMDi	Directorate of Integration and Diversity
IOM.	International Organization for Migration
MIPEX.	Migrant Integration Policy Index
NAV	Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration
NOKUT	Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIKT	Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research
SSB	Statistisk sentralbyrå
UDI	Norwegian Directorate of Immigration
UiA	University of Agder
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Table of Contents

<i>DECLARATION</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>ABSTRACT</i>	<i>ii</i>
<i>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>DEDICATION</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>List of Abbreviations and Acronyms</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>List of Tables</i>	<i>x</i>
<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>CHAPTER ONE</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>INTRODUCTION</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>1.0 Introduction</i>	<i>1</i>
1.1 Refugees in Norway.....	3
1.2 Problem statement.....	5
1.3 Research objectives.....	6
1.4 Research questions.....	6
1.5 Significance of the study.....	6
1.6 Geographical Study Area and Context.	7
1.7 Personal Motivation for the Research.....	10
1.8 Definition of Key Terms.....	11
1.9 Research Structure	12
<i>CHAPTER TWO</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>2.0 Introduction</i>	<i>14</i>
2.1 Migration and Sustainable Development.....	14
2.2 Refugees and Integration.	16
2.3 Challenges of Refugee Integration.....	18

2.4 Social Integration.....	22
2.5 The Social Integration Framework	24
2.5.1 Structural Integration	25
2.5.2 Cultural Integration	25
2.5.3 Interactive integration	26
2.5.4 Identification integration.....	27
2.6 Theoretical Overview.....	34
2.6.1 The Social Capital Theory.	34
<i>CHAPTER THREE.....</i>	<i>38</i>
<i>RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....</i>	<i>38</i>
3.0 Introduction.....	38
3.1 Epistemological and Ontological Considerations.....	38
3.1.1 Positionality and Reflexivity.....	40
3.2 Research Method.	41
3.3 Research Strategies.	42
3.4 Research Design.....	43
3.5 Sampling Methods.	43
3.5.1 Inclusion Criteria for Respondents	44
3.5.2 Inclusion Criteria for Institutions.....	45
3.5.3 Inclusion criteria for document analyses	46
3.5.4 Justification for inclusion criteria	47
3.6 Data Collection Methods.	47
3.7 Description of informants.	48
3.8 Method for Analysing Data.	50
3.9 Ethical Considerations.	52
3.10 Transparency.....	53

3.11 Challenges.....	53
<i>CHAPTER FOUR</i>	55
<i>DOCUMENT ANALYSES AND DISCUSSIONS ON INTEGRATION POLICIES</i>	55
<i>4.0 Introduction</i>	55
4.1. The foundation of refugee interpretation in Norway.	55
4.1.1 Norwegian Integration Policy.	57
4.1.2 Provision of Housing and Settlement of Refugees in a Local Municipality.....	60
4.1.3 The Efforts of the Refugee Settlement Office.	61
4.1.4 Competence Mapping and Career Guidance.	63
4.1.5 Norwegian Introduction Programme.	64
4.1.6 Refugee Integration Initiatives by Volunteer Organisations.	68
4.1.7 Summary of the Norwegian integration policies.	68
<i>CHAPTER FIVE</i>	71
<i>FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS OF QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS</i>	71
<i>5.0 Introduction</i>	71
5.1 Examining how actors working with integration of refugees understand the challenges and opportunities in the way they work to ensure inclusive and sustainable development. 71	
5.1.1 Language and culture competence vs language and cultural barriers.....	73
5.1.2 Employment vs. unemployment.	76
5.1.3 Social support systems vs. lack of social support systems.	81
5.1.4 Introduction programme.	83
5.1.5 Challenging social connections.....	84
5.2 How refugees in Kristiansand experience social integration.....	86
5.2.1 Emotional and psychological issues.	87
5.2.2 Challenging social connections.....	91
5.2.3 Language and cultural barriers.....	93

5.2.4 Employment difficulties.....	94
5.3 Concluding personal reflections.	97
<i>CHAPTER SIX</i>	<i>100</i>
<i>Conclusion and Recommendations.</i>	<i>100</i>
<i>6.0 Introduction</i>	<i>100</i>
6.1 Conclusion.	100
6.2 Recommendations based on findings.....	102
<i>References</i>	<i>104</i>
<i>Research Consent Form</i>	<i>116</i>
<i>APPENDIX I</i>	<i>118</i>
Interview Guide for Red Cross	118
<i>APPENDIX II</i>	<i>120</i>
Interview Guide for Kristiansand municipality and Norway Multicultural Centre.	120
<i>APPENDIX III</i>	<i>122</i>
Interview guide for refugees.	122

List of Tables

Table 1: Background information of respondents (refugees).	46
Table 2: Background information of respondents (Red Cross, Kristiansand kommune and Norway Multicultural Center.	46

List of Figures

Figure 1: Kristiansand Municipality	9
Figure 2: Social Integration FrameworkFigure.....	25
Figure 3: Conceptual framework of integration.....	28
Figure 4: Three-Way Process Conception of Integration.	34
Figure 5: Themes under facilitators of integrating refugees for inclusive and sustainable development.....	72
Figure 6: Themes under challenges of integrating refugees for inclusive and sustainable development.....	73
Figure 7: Themes under refugees experiences of social integration.....	87

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction.

The 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Agenda, established in 2015, prioritised enhancing global health and education, fostering economic growth, reducing poverty and inequality, and promoting collective efforts towards peace and prosperity. The primary objective of this vision, which was unanimously embraced by all 193 United Nations (UN) member states, was to ensure inclusivity by not neglecting any individual or group. This involved considering populations that are susceptible to vulnerabilities, such as individuals who have been forcibly displaced from their homes or countries (refugees) (UN, 2019). In the discourse surrounding sustainable development, there has been a notable inclusion of refugee integration in the policy documents of countries such as Norway, which holds a central position in this field of study (Lee et al., 2014; Thieme & Ghimire, 2014; UN DESA, 2017b). Nijenhuis and Leung (2017) contend that the connection between development and forced migration or migration was first recognised during the 1994 UN Population and Development conference in Cairo. Subsequent UN initiatives addressing this issue took place after the year 2000. While the concept of "migration or forced migration" received limited attention in the millennium development goals (MDGs), it has gained significant prominence in the discourse surrounding the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Nijenhuis & Leung 2017, p. 53).

In addition, scholarly sources such as the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (United Nations, 2018) and the Issues Brief on Migration, Integration and Sustainable Development (United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, 2012) analyse various aspects of forced migration, including its implications for host and receiving nations as well as for migrants and refugees. The evaluations of the correlation between forced migration and development have changed over time within the realm of development discourses. Forced migration has traditionally been perceived as a manifestation of internal development shortcomings in countries of origin, characterised by inadequate employment opportunities, infrastructure deficiencies, and the presence of armed conflicts or natural disasters. These factors drive individuals to leave their home countries, resulting in a loss of skilled individuals and hindering innovation within the nations of origin (Docquier et al., 2007; de Haas, 2010). The economic impact of migrants or refugees has typically been recognised

and appreciated in host countries. However, the perception of immigration pressure has resulted in the implementation of more stringent and discerning policies regarding refugees and migration (Faist, 2008; Nyberg-Srensen et al. 2002).

In contemporary discourse, policy deliberations about forced migration and voluntary migration have recently experienced a shift towards a more optimistic outlook, marking a departure from the prevailing tone observed over the past two decades. The topic of forced migration and development is increasingly being deliberated by policymakers within the framework of sustainability discourse. Nevertheless, scholars have raised concerns regarding the prevailing narrative of these programmes, as it tacitly assumes that only specific forms of well-regulated migration and settled ways of life are pertinent to the achievement of sustainable development (Adger et al., 2019). Delgado Wise et al. (2013) argue that the narrative fails to acknowledge ongoing inequalities within neoliberal globalisation processes. It is crucial to consider multiple scales when examining migration or forced migration phenomena. This entails considering national perspectives of both origin and destination countries, as well as situating migration processes within the broader context of neoliberal globalisation and the resulting disparities. Additionally, it is crucial to address the viewpoints of individual migrants, refugees, and their families Delgado Wise et al. (2013).

Consequently, the scholarly discourse surrounding the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has encompassed an examination of forced migration and global inequalities (Hackl, 2018). The geographical framing of migration within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been subject to criticism by scholars (Hennebry et al., 2018; Nijenhuis & Leung, 2017). Scholars such as Gammage and Stevanovic (2018), Hennebry et al. (2018), and Holliday et al. (2019) have raised inquiries regarding the gendered nature of migration and the insufficient representation of related experiences. Additionally, Elias and Holliday (2018) have highlighted the issue of irregular migration, while Thompson and Walton-Roberts (2018) have emphasised the inadequacy of addressing discrimination within the context of global development goals. Adger et al. (2019) express skepticism regarding the portrayal of migration in the SDGs, positing that mobility should be perceived as a deviation from the norm rather than a prevailing trend.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that while there has been some attention given to the examination of SDG policy discourses, only a limited number of scholars (Al-Husban & Adams, 2016; Jackson et al., 2008; Lewis & Runsten, 2008) have made theoretical connections

between migration and sustainability concerns. Al-Husban and Adams (2016) establish a connection between refugees and the concept of sustainability, while Jackson et al. (2008) portrays amenity migration as an integral component of sustainable regional development. The studies conducted by Winkels and Adger (2002) and Thieme and Siegmann (2010) examine the role of social capital and livelihood vulnerability in the context of migration. Additionally, Lewis and Runsten (2008) explore the connection between migration and sustainability challenges within the fair-trade coffee production industry.

The ongoing challenges faced by refugees, including violations of labour rights, living in marginalised conditions, and enduring persistent inequalities (UN, 2018), are highly pertinent. Furthermore, the potential to enhance the conditions of forced migrants through the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is undeniably significant. However, there is a noticeable absence of comprehensive discourse regarding a holistic vision or framework for evaluating the factors that contribute to the fairness and potential sustainability of migration, as well as the existence of trade-offs within this context. The topic of individual rights for refugees and migrants, as well as the broader impact of migration on a national level, is a subject of ongoing scholarly discourse, often examined as distinct issues (Delgado Wise et al., 2013; Delgado Wise, 2020). Hence, it is pertinent to examine the manner in which a nation such as Norway, renowned for its commendable track record in immigration and sustainable development matters, effectively incorporates refugees into its social fabric, in alignment with the objectives outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals.

1.1 Refugees in Norway.

According to the United Nations (UN) (2022), refugees are individuals who possess a valid apprehension of experiencing persecution due to factors such as religion, race, nationality, or affiliation with a specific group. Additionally, refugees encompass those who have relocated outside their country of origin due to natural calamities. This category also encompasses individuals who reside outside their country of origin, exhibit reluctance to seek protection within that territory, lack the same nationality as their previous residence, or encounter obstacles preventing their return to their habitual place of residence. According to the United Nations (UN, 2022) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2022), the global population of individuals forcibly displaced experienced a rise from 79.5 million at the conclusion of 2019 and was expected to reach 110 million by the end of 2023. Displacement reasons can be categorised into two distinct groups: natural factors and man-made factors. The

primary factor contributing to natural displacement is the gradual progression of climate change, frequently accompanied by additional natural calamities such as droughts, hurricanes, floods, and the rise in sea levels. Nevertheless, the primary anthropogenic factors contributing to displacement encompass civil unrest, acts of violence, socioeconomic deprivation, limited access to healthcare and education, and various other social and economic adversities (United Nations, 2022).

During the 19th and early 20th centuries, Norway predominantly functioned as an emigration source country, with the United States emerging as a prominent destination for Norwegian emigrants. The reasons for the occurrence can be attributed to religious intolerance, limited availability of cultivable land, and a persistent increase in taxation (Parveen, 2020). The transition occurred as a consequence of alterations in the Norwegian economy. Following the mid-20th century, a significant influx of migrants began to migrate to Norway, driven by the imperative to escape conflict and seek asylum. Hence, the majority of refugees originated from nations including Russia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Eritrea. In response to the growing influx of refugees and asylum seekers in Norway, the government has taken proactive measures to foster international collaboration aimed at upholding the principles of respect and safeguarding the rights of refugees (Parveen, 2020). Norway, as a member of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2022), is committed to safeguarding and advocating for the entitlements of refugees to seek asylum in situations where they are fleeing from violence, conflict, or legal oppression. Moreover, as reported by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in 2022, Norway demonstrates a willingness to accept and extend substantial assistance to refugees originating from various regions across the globe. The determination of the resettlement quota in Norway is carried out by the Storting, the country's parliament, and the Ministry of Justice and Public Security. This process is conducted in a political manner, as stated by the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) in 2022.

The UDI is presently designated as the governmental entity responsible for the administration of refugee status, the processing of asylum applications, the operation and supervision of asylum centres, and the oversight of expulsion proceedings. Chapter 4 of Section 28 of the Immigration Act of Norway pertains to the subject matter of refugees and the issuance of residence permits. According to the legislation, an individual of foreign nationality may be classified as a refugee if they possess a legitimate apprehension of being subjected to

persecution based on factors such as ethnicity, origin, skin colour, religion, nationality, membership in a specific social group, or political opinion. Furthermore, this individual must be unable or unwilling, due to such fear, to seek protection from their country of origin, as stated in Article 1A of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees dated 28 July 1951 and the Protocol of 31 January 1967. Alternatively, an individual who does not meet the criteria outlined but still confronts a genuine possibility of being exposed to capital punishment, torture, or other forms of cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment or punishment upon repatriation to their nation of origin can seek for a refugee status (Immigration Act, 2008, p. 13; Parveen, 2020).

1.2 Problem statement.

The successful integration of refugees into host societies plays a crucial role in achieving sustainable development objectives. In the context of Norway, a nation renowned for its dedication to refugee integration and the pursuit of sustainable development objectives, there exists a pressing necessity to thoroughly grasp the obstacles and possibilities linked to promoting the integration of refugees, with the aim of advancing sustainable development. The influx of refugees and other immigrants into Norway has led to a diverse population, thereby fostering cultural enrichment and facilitating economic advancement. However, in spite of Norway's proactive measures to enforce integration policies and programmes, there are ongoing disparities that hinder the comprehensive integration of refugees in various domains, including education, employment, and social engagement (Djuve & Kavli, 2018).

The significance of integration in relation to sustainable development has been recognized in previous scholarly examinations (Melber, 2006; Castillo-Hernandez et al., 2020). However, there is a dearth of studies that specifically focus on the Norwegian context and explore the intricate interplay between refugee integration and the objectives of sustainable development. As Norway aligns its commitment to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it becomes crucial to address the disparity between existing refugee laws and the attainment of these global objectives. In order to establish informed policies that effectively connect refugee integration initiatives with the attainment of sustainable development goals, it is vital to conduct examination of the experiences of refugees in social integration programmes. Additionally, an assessment of the strategies that effectively facilitate their complete engagement in society is essential (Djuve & Kavli, 2018). The rationale for the study's focus

also on refugees lies in their predominant tendency to relocate from their countries of origin due to various destabilizing factors, including armed conflicts, natural calamities, and other pressing concerns. Consequently, individuals frequently relocate from their countries of origin without adequate preparation, resulting in numerous difficulties encountered within their unfamiliar surroundings (Castillo-Hernandez et al., 2020). Hence, it is important to examine the integration policies for refugees in Norway and understand how refugees in Kristiansand experience social integration. The study also seeks professional knowledge from actors working with integration to understand the opportunities and challenges of integrating refugees for inclusive and sustainable development.

1.3 Research objectives.

1. To examine the existing policies aimed at integrating refugees for inclusive and sustainable development.
2. To examine how actors working with integration of refugees understand the challenges and opportunities in the way they work to ensure inclusive and sustainable development.
3. To examine how refugees in Kristiansand experience social integration.

1.4 Research questions.

1. What are the existing policies aimed at integrating refugees for inclusive and sustainable development?
2. How do actors working with integration of refugees understand the challenges and opportunities in the way they work to ensure inclusive and sustainable development?
3. How do refugees in Kristiansand experience social integration?

1.5 Significance of the study.

The study on the social integration of refugees for an inclusive and sustainable development holds significant importance, encompassing various stakeholders such as policymakers, researchers, immigrant communities, and society as a whole. This study has the potential to offer valuable insights to policymakers in Norway through a comprehensive examination of the integration of refugees in relation to the goals of sustainable development. The results of this study can be utilised to enhance current integration strategies and establish novel initiatives that cater to the requirements of both refugees and immigrants, while also aligning with the national objectives of sustainable development. Given Norway's dedication to achieving the Sustainable

Development Goals set forth by the United Nations, it is important to assess the extent to which the integration of refugees contributes to the realisation of these objectives.

Once more, the research will hopefully demonstrate how a successful integration process can result in improved economic growth, reduced disparities, increased educational achievement, and various other long-term developmental outcomes. Understanding the challenges encountered by refugees during the process of integration, and recognising the ways in which these challenges intersect with the principles of sustainable development, has the potential to empower both refugees and immigrant communities. The findings of this study have the potential to inform various community initiatives, resource allocation strategies, and advocacy efforts. By doing so, these insights can assist refugees in effectively navigating integration challenges and making more meaningful contributions to their host society. Understanding the opportunities and challenges of integrating refugees can bolster social cohesion and foster a broader understanding of global viewpoints.

In the same vein, this study promotes the recognition of diversity as a beneficial factor that fosters innovation and adaptability, underscoring the importance of integrating refugees for the purpose of achieving long-term sustainable development. The findings can be utilised by researchers to conduct further investigations, adapt methodologies, and enhance comprehension of the intricate interplay between the integration of refugees and sustainable development. In an increasingly interconnected global landscape, the experiences and strategies employed by Norway in the realms of refugee integration and sustainable growth hold valuable insights for other nations grappling with similar challenges. The implications of the study extend beyond the geographical boundaries of Norway, thereby making a valuable contribution to the wider discourse surrounding the utilisation of refugees as a means to achieve global sustainable development objectives.

1.6 Geographical Study Area and Context.

The study was conducted within the geographical boundaries of Kristiansand municipality, located in the southern region of Norway. Norway is one of the Nordic countries. Norway, situated in the northern region of Europe, is geographically surrounded by the Barents Sea to the north, the North-Atlantic Ocean or Norwegian Sea (Norskevæhet) to the West, and the North Sea (Nordsjøen) to the south. The country in question is geographically adjacent to Sweden,

Finland, and Russia (Sverige, Finland, and Russland) in the eastern direction. Norway has gained recognition as a host country for immigrants. The country's remarkable natural environment, robust economic stability, and comprehensive welfare state system contribute to its appeal as a desirable and hospitable nation. According to the Norwegian Statistical Bureau (SSB, 2018), immigration plays a significant role in the population growth of Norway. Since the year 1950, the population of Norway has experienced a notable increase of approximately 2 million individuals as a result of immigration. As of the present, the country's population stands at 5.5 million, according to data provided by the Statistics Norway (SSB, 2023). In the year 2014, Norway implemented a reform in its local government structure, resulting in a reduction of the number of municipalities from 428 to 356, and a decrease in the number of counties from 19 to 11, effective as of January 1st, 2020 (Regjeringen, 2020).

The primary aim of this reform was to decrease the quantity of municipalities with the intention of providing equitable and satisfactory services to residents, both presently and in the future. Additionally, the reform sought to establish a comprehensive and coordinated approach to community development, encompassing both larger and smaller municipalities. The reform also aimed to cultivate financially stable and sustainable municipalities, while concurrently enhancing local democracy and granting greater authority to the municipalities in question (Regjeringen, 2020). According to the source, the reform resulted in the consolidation of East and West Agder counties into a unified county named Agder. Similarly, the municipalities of Kristiansand, Søgne, and Sogndalen were merged into a singular municipality known as Kristiansand. Based on data provided by Statistics Norway, the Municipality of Kristiansand was reported to have a population of 111,654 individuals as of January 1, 2020 (Kristiansand Municipality, 2020). The municipality of Kristiansand holds the distinction of being the fifth largest city in terms of population and serves as the primary administrative hub for Agder County. The region in question is geographically adjacent to the municipalities of Vennesla and Birkenes to the north, Lillesand to the east, and Lindesnes to the west (Regjeringen, 2020).

According to Kristiansen's (2017) research, Kristiansand surpasses the national average in terms of immigrant settlement. Kristiansand is recognized as a municipality with diverse population of over 161 individuals hailing from various nations (Buch, Berthou, & Bredgaard, 2018). In the data from the Norwegian statistics in 2014, approximately 16% of the population in Kristiansand consisted of individuals who were either immigrants or born in Norway to

immigrant parents (Kristiansand Municipality, 2015). The presence of a diverse population in Kristiansand contributes to its status as a city in development. Consequently, the Municipality of Kristiansand mandates that all residents actively participate in the advancement of the city. This has significantly increased my motivation to conduct this research. On the one hand, the municipality has implemented various initiatives aimed at facilitating the integration of immigrant refugees. The immigrants themselves demonstrate a strong commitment not only to achieving personal success by accessing employment and attaining autonomy, but also to contributing to the overall welfare of the municipality of Kristiansand. The successful integration of individuals into the labour market following the Introduction Programme necessitates the implementation of comprehensive and ongoing policies and strategies. Additionally, it is crucial to incorporate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to address the various obstacles that impede their integration. The Municipality of Kristiansand places significant emphasis on achieving full integration and participation in order to promote sustainable development (Regjeringen, 2020).

Figure 1: Kristiansand Municipality



(Google Map, 2024)

1.7 Personal Motivation for the Research.

As a Ghanaian student studying for a master's degree in Norway, I am motivated to explore the complex area of refugee social integration for inclusive and sustainable development. I am motivated by a strong sense of social responsibility and a drive to make a meaningful impact. Having been raised in Ghana, a nation renowned for its historical practise of providing refuge to individuals escaping conflicts in other African countries, I have personally observed the difficulties encountered by refugees in Ghana such as poor access to education, poor health conditions, poor accommodation, lack of job opportunities and discrimination. Refugees and their children are mostly on the streets of Accra begging for money or selling things under the scorchy sun to make ends meet. The attraction I experienced towards Norway, a country widely recognised for its progressive policies, sparked my interest in studying the strategies utilised by host nations, specifically Norway, to facilitate the integration of refugees into society.

As a student of Global Development and Planning, I have realised the importance of tackling the difficulties encountered by refugees on a global level. The Sustainable Development Goals, with their inclusive and interconnected approach to global issues, offered a comprehensive framework that aligned seamlessly with my academic interests. The primary emphasis of my research revolved around the nation of Norway, renowned for its extensive policies and steadfast dedication to safeguarding human rights. The progress made in social integration in Norway has inspired me, leading me to study the specific policies, programmes, and community initiatives that foster the well-being and inclusion of refugees.

The primary focus of my research was to align with Sustainable Development Goal 10, as it is widely acknowledged that promoting social inclusion is crucial for mitigating disparities. My aim was to analyse Norway's approach to addressing the difficulties faced by refugees in order to identify effective methods that can be disseminated in societies that are culturally attuned, ultimately helping to reduce inequalities on a global scale. The objective of my research was twofold: to identify strategies and to promote the significance of cultivating inclusive communities. I intended to engage in a discourse that highlights the reciprocal advantages of diversity and comprehension by illuminating the favourable effects of social integration on both refugees and host societies. The overall aim of my thesis was to examine the integration policies for refugees, understand the opportunities and the challenges of integrating refugees for

inclusive and sustainable development, and how refugees in Kristiansand experience social integration.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms.

In order to prevent any confusion regarding the meaning of certain terms, it is crucial for me to provide clear definitions for the key terms used in this research. This is necessary because individuals may interpret and define these terms differently based on their own perspectives.

Integration: As defined by IOM (2021), integration is a reciprocal process of mutual adjustment between migrants and the host societies they reside in. The concept involves a range of shared duties for migrants and communities, and it also encompasses related ideas like social inclusion and social cohesion. The term "integration" has multiple dimensions and various interpretations. However, for the purpose of this study, the definitions used in chapter two of this study are consistent with those of the IOM.

Immigrant: An immigrant, as defined by the country of arrival, is an individual who relocates to a country different from their own nationality or usual place of residence, thereby establishing the country of destination as their new habitual residence (IOM, 2021).

Refugee: The term "refugee" is defined by the UN convention of 1951, specifically in Article 1A (2). It refers to any individual who is outside their country of nationality due to a well-founded fear of persecution based on factors such as race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. This person is either unable or unwilling to seek protection from their own country, or they are stateless and unwilling to return to their former habitual residence due to this fear.

Asylum Seeker: An asylum seeker is a person who seeks international protection in a country other than their own because of the atrocities and harm they have experienced in their country of origin (UNHCR, 2006). An important distinction to note is that, as stated by the UNHCR (2006), every refugee starts off as an asylum seeker, but not every asylum seeker is ultimately granted refugee status.

Introduction Programme: As per IDMi (2019), the Introduction Programme is a time-limited initiative that aims to assist adult refugee immigrants and their families in settling in municipalities. The programme provides basic qualifications and economic support, with a

duration ranging from 6 months to 2 or 3 years for all participants. However, under the new law, those who wish to complete secondary school can avail of the programme for up to 4 years.

Sustainable Development Goals: The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 interconnected global objectives that were established by the United Nations (UN) in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The objective of these goals is to address the most significant global challenges and establish a more prosperous and equitable future in terms of economics, society, and the environment. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) encompass a range of important issues including the elimination of poverty, provision of high-quality education, promotion of gender equality, access to clean water and sanitation, availability of affordable and clean energy, promotion of decent work and economic growth, and development of industry, innovation, and infrastructure.

1.9 Research Structure

The study is organised into six chapters. The chapters are as follows: (1) introduction, (2) literature review and theoretical framework, (3) methodology, (4) document presentation and analysis of integration policies (5) empirical findings and data analysis of the qualitative interviews, and (6) conclusion and recommendations. In the initial chapter, I provide an explanation for the purpose of this research, outline its organisational structure, and elaborate on the specific methods employed in subsequent chapters. This chapter encompasses several key elements, including an introduction, a research problem, research objectives and questions, a geographical study area and context, my personal motivation for conducting this research, definitions of key terms, and an outline of the research structure. In the second chapter, I thoroughly examine the existing literature to gain a comprehensive understanding of the ongoing discussions related to this topic and its significance to this study. In the theoretical framework, I provide a thorough explanation of the selected theories and their interconnections.

Chapter Three centres on the methodology employed in the study. This pertains to the description, rationale, and implementation of the selected methods for this research. After establishing the positionality of the research, I carefully considered the research methodology, design, strategies, epistemological and ontological considerations, data material and sampling method, data collection through interviews, data analysis, research ethics, and research challenges. In Chapter Four, I present documents analysis regarding integration policies whilst

Chapter Five looks at the data presentation and analysis from the qualitative interviews that has to do with the last two objectives of the study. Chapter Six is dedicated to providing concluding remarks and policy recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction.

The incorporation of theories and concepts is commonly regarded as a fundamental element within the research process. Consequently, in the context of conducting an examination, the researcher's objective is to either evaluate the credibility of an established theory or endeavour to formulate a novel one (Silverman, 2015; Clark et al. 2021; Creswell, 2021). This chapter undertakes an analysis of the correlation between migration and sustainable development. It proceeds to define and contextualize the notion of social integration of refugees in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals, while also exploring its interpretation and application within the scope of this research. The existing body of literature pertaining to the difficulties associated with the integration of refugees is also examined in order to enhance comprehension of the challenges faced by this population. A review of existing scholarly literature pertaining to related topics has been conducted. The focus of this study was on the Social Capital theory, as well as the four dimensions of social integration frameworks proposed by Heckmann (2005), Ager and Strang's (2008) conceptual frameworks and Garcés-Mascreñas and Penninx (2016) integration processes and policies in Europe. This literature review was done through a systematic search with key words such as migration, refugees and integration, social integration, migration and sustainable development, inclusive development, challenges of integration and facilitators of integration. Scopus and google scholar were the main database used for this systematic search.

2.1 Migration and Sustainable Development.

Migration is explicitly included in the global development agenda for the first time in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This agenda acknowledges migration as a crucial aspect of development. This statement underscores the increasing body of evidence that substantiates the role of migration in facilitating the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals. The explicit mention of migration can be observed in Target 10.7, which stresses the need to advance the orderly, safe, regular, and responsible movement of individuals, including the effective execution of deliberate and well-coordinated policies pertaining to migrants and forced migrants. The successful attainment of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

necessitates the appropriate consideration of refugees and migrants. It is important to note that migration is a multifaceted occurrence that intersects with all the SDGs (ILO, 2021).

Migration is a historical and enduring human phenomenon aimed at enhancing socioeconomic welfare, thereby making a significant contribution towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 1, which focuses on eradicating poverty. Refugees and migrants possess the potential to foster the advancement of more comprehensive, inclusive, and robust communities through the transfer of knowledge, establishment of networks, and utilisation of skills within their respective communities. Additionally, their contributions to the host country's gross domestic product (GDP) are estimated to range from 7 to 10% (OECD and ILO, 2018). Refugees who are well integrated into the system and migrants who utilise established pathways and possess valid documentation are more likely to enjoy improved opportunities for employment and sustainable livelihoods, thereby making a positive contribution towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 8, which focuses on promoting decent work and economic growth. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2021), there is a projected population of approximately 169 million individuals who are classified as refugee and migrant workers. These individuals play a crucial role in delivering essential services, establishing fresh business ventures, and contributing to overall economic expansion (ILO, 2021).

Moreover, it is worth noting that approximately one in nine individuals globally depend on financial transfers from their relatives and acquaintances residing in foreign countries, commonly known as remittances, to facilitate better nourishment, education, and healthcare (DESA, 2019). This practice not only contributes to the advancement of educational opportunities, as emphasized in Sustainable Development Goal 4, but also enhances overall health and well-being, as outlined in Sustainable Development. Over the course of time, remittances have demonstrated their significant importance for communities and their impressive ability to withstand economic shocks, as evidenced by a 7.3% increase and a total of USD 589 billion in 2021 (Ratha et al., 2021). Enhanced educational opportunities for migrants, refugees, and their families can significantly enhance their capacity to realize their utmost potential as both innovators and leaders (Ratha et al., 2021).

According to the New American Economy (2019), the United States is home to approximately 3.2 million refugee and immigrant entrepreneurs who contribute to the advancement of Sustainable Development Goal 9, which focuses on industry, innovation, and infrastructure. Failure to adequately consider these factors may result in the potential loss of migration and refugee-related development prospects, as well as undermine the overarching principle of the 2030 Agenda, which aims to ensure that no individual is excluded. Failure to integrate human mobility considerations into policies and strategies aimed at addressing pressing issues such as environmental and climate change, land degradation, and natural disasters will impede our ability to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 13, which pertains to climate action. In a similar vein, failure to adequately address the multifaceted forms of discrimination encountered by women who are refugees or migrants within their respective communities of origin, transit, and host countries will impede progress towards achieving the gender equality objectives outlined in Sustainable Development Goal 5 (ILO, 2018; Ratha et al., 2021).

Throughout history, there have consistently been efforts aimed at optimising the potential of migration for the purpose of fostering development. Various stakeholders, including governments, civil society, diaspora organisations, international organisations, and United Nations (UN) agencies such as the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), have collaborated with national and local governments and other relevant entities to pursue this objective even prior to its formalisation in the 2030 Agenda. The incorporation of force migration and migration into development policies and sectoral policies, such as those pertaining to health care or employment, was undertaken. Additionally, the formulation of customised migration-specific policies and the implementation of migration and development programming were carried out (ILO, 2018; Ratha et al., 2021).

2.2 Refugees and Integration.

Refugees are individuals who have sought refuge in a foreign country due to the presence of war, violence, conflict, persecution, or natural disasters, as stated by Sharpe (1995). Diverse societies or nations exhibit varying criteria for the admission of refugees. It is anticipated that the refugee will acquire proficiency in the language of the host society and develop a comprehensive understanding of their rights as a constituent of said society. According to Li (2003), there is an expectation that refugees will integrate into mainstream society and contribute to its productivity. The process of integration entails the gradual assimilation of

refugees into a foreign nation or community, either on an individual or collective basis, wherein they engage in various social, economic, political, cultural, and religious endeavours within the host country (Castles et al., 2013). Modood (2013) asserts that integration is characterised by a mutual and interactive process in which both majority and minority populations are anticipated to participate. This approach aims to distribute the responsibility of integration more equitably, rather than placing the entire burden on the minority group. The process of integration must be spearheaded by the established society, including the workforce, government, and other institutions (Modood, 2013: 44).

In alignment with Modood's assertion, the European Commission characterises integration as a dynamic and reciprocal process of mutual adaptation between refugees or migrants and the host societies. Modood highlights the significance of integration as a comprehensive concept, asserting that the integration process necessitates the presence of equality of opportunity within an unsegmented society. It is worth noting that both definitions of integration underscore the importance of mutual engagement between minority groups, and the majority population (Modood, 2013: 44).

Similarly, Heckman (2005) espouses a comparable perspective to Modood, positing that integration is a gradual and enduring process that involves the acceptance and assimilation of refugees into the fundamental institutions, positions, and social standing of the host society. The author places significant emphasis on the mechanism of interaction between refugees and host societies. The process of integration for refugees encompasses the acquisition of a new cultural framework, the attainment of rights and responsibilities, and the establishment of social standing. Additionally, it involves the cultivation of interpersonal connections with individuals belonging to the host community. This process cultivates sentiments of inclusion and acknowledgement within the host society. Integration, in contrast, pertains to the process of embracing and accommodating the requirements of refugees, while also ensuring equitable access to opportunities for them (Heckmann, 2005; Polzer, 2007).

While integration is a reciprocal process, discussions surrounding forced migration often emphasise the responsibility of refugees to adapt to local customs and assimilate into the host community, resulting in favourable integration outcomes (Li, 2003). Consequently, the host

society or nation typically shapes the process of integration by also embracing and cooperating with refugees (Jentsch, 2007).

2.3 Challenges of Refugee Integration.

The process of assimilating refugees into society is replete with challenges. One of the primary challenges associated with the process of incorporating refugees into a society stems from the prevailing societal perceptions and attitudes towards refugees. Hynie (2018) asserts that in high-income nations, refugees are often perceived as a fiscal liability. Refugees exert a considerable impact on a nation's resources, encompassing various social and economic necessities such as housing, employment, healthcare, and education, while their presence does not yield substantial benefits. The perception of realistic threat and economic burden can be explained by the theory of realistic group conflict (Hynie, 2018). According to the theory, instances of prejudice and intergroup conflict often arise when individuals belonging to a particular group perceive members of another group as posing a potential threat. The potential threat may manifest as either tangible or subjective, and it may be associated with tangible assets such as employment opportunities, housing, and access to healthcare, as well as the collective social status of the intergroup (Mutezo, 2015). Based on this theoretical framework, it is posited that individuals residing in a particular locality may exhibit heightened hostility towards refugees or immigrants in the event they perceive them as potential competitors for employment opportunities and as consumers of resources that would otherwise be allocated to the local population (Mutezo, 2015).

In the same vein, Zárate et al. (2004) posit that an additional threat arises from the perceived cultural threat that local populations encounter during the process of integrating refugees and immigrants. The concept of a "cultural threat" pertains to the perception held by immigrants and refugees regarding the potential endangerment of their cultural values, customs, and beliefs. Consequently, when individuals residing in a particular locality perceive the potential assimilation of immigrants and refugees as a challenge to their cultural heritage, they tend to exhibit adverse reactions towards the demographic. This suggests that the process of integration is likely to result in greater levels of negative responses from individuals within the local community, particularly in terms of social and interpersonal interactions. The phenomenon is expected to exert an expeditious influence on the interhuman connections and societal status of individuals seeking refuge or migrating to a foreign country. Over time, the presence of this

pessimistic mindset poses challenges to the process of assimilating refugees and immigrants into their host society Zárate et al. (2004).

Furthermore, Hynie (2018) has identified the perceptions pertaining to fairness and equity among refugees and asylum seekers as an additional obstacle to their integration. The media's portrayal of refugees and asylum seekers often incorporates a discourse that is characterised by suspicion regarding their legitimate claims for protection. Refugees possess distinct entitlements and safeguards that are not extended to other categories of migrants. The issue of whether refugees and asylum seekers are deserving of their rights is a recurring factor that reliably influences individuals' attitudes towards this population. The lack of trust in the principles of fairness and equity gives rise to adverse emotions and attitudes towards individuals seeking refuge and asylum. This phenomenon adversely affects initiatives aimed at facilitating the integration of refugees, thereby exacerbating the challenges associated with their integration process. Refugee integration is closely linked to the significant concern of compromised mental well-being (Hynie, 2018).

Bempong et al. (2019) posit that the mental well-being of refugees is adversely affected by various factors, including exposure to violence, unaccompanied migration between countries, and internalising difficulties. Trauma emerges as a highly prevalent mental health concern within the refugee population. Trauma is observed to present itself in various forms during different stages of the refugee experience, namely before migration, after migration, and following displacement. Refugees often encounter a range of distressing circumstances, such as torture, violence, killing, rape, atrocities, starvation, and incarceration, which pose significant challenges to their successful integration into new communities (Bemak & Chung, 2017). The decline in mental well-being among refugees has a discernible influence on their ability to effectively navigate social situations and establish meaningful connections with individuals within their host community Bempong et al. (2019).

Moreover, Fazel et al. (2012) have identified cultural shock as a significant factor that hampers the process of acclimatisation among refugees. This phenomenon is observed to unfold in six distinct stages. The factors encompassing the experiences of refugees include strain, a perception of loss and deprivation, alienation from members of the new culture and homeland, disorientation regarding their roles and expectations, a simultaneous amalgamation of surprise, disgust, anxiety, and indignation, and a feeling of helplessness. Moreover, the experience of

residing in an unpredictable setting characterised by restricted access to essential resources and fundamental infrastructure, coupled with the temporary nature of refugee shelters, can engender emotional distress within refugee populations. In general, the declining mental well-being of refugees hinders their ability to actively participate in integration initiatives. The diminished efficacy of integration programmes is accompanied by a hinderance to the successful integration of refugees into the host community (Fazel et al, 2012).

One additional obstacle related to the assimilation of refugees, as identified by Millere and Dobelniece (2018), pertains to insufficient readiness for the host country and a dearth of information and consciousness. Nations that offer asylum to individuals seeking refuge and those classified as refugees encounter distinct difficulties, including insufficient institutional backing, limited coordination and assistance from governmental bodies at both state and local levels, and a dearth of training for crucial service providers catering to the needs of refugees, such as healthcare practitioners and trainers. This phenomenon poses a direct challenge to a nation's capacity to provide effective support and facilitate the seamless integration of refugees and individuals seeking asylum. As an illustration, Latvia has consented to accommodate a total of 531 individuals seeking asylum, originating from Italy, Turkey, and Greece. Due to the absence of prior expertise in this domain, a comprehensive reconstruction of the entire system was undertaken to guarantee a seamless and effective integration process. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that the integration programmes implemented in Latvia exhibited several deficiencies, such as the absence of a comprehensive language training initiative and an inadequate housing strategy (Millere & Dobelniece, 2018; UNHCR, 2021).

The challenge of integrating refugees into a developing nation is further compounded by the perception of cultural loss or transformation experienced by both refugees and residents of the host country. The phenomenon of cultural collision arises in the context of refugee resettlement, wherein the apprehension of cultural erosion engenders adverse sentiments among both the host community and the refugees. Bhattarai (2015) asserts that the efficacy of integration programmes is directly influenced by these negative behaviours. The occurrence can be elucidated through the concept of acculturation, which occurs when disparate cultures converge. Acculturation is a common phenomenon that significantly heightens the probability of cultural dominance by one group over another. Acculturation, alternatively referred to as sociocultural change, represents a significant form of social transformation. The consequences

of encountering or experiencing a cultural shift can exhibit a wide range of outcomes, some of which may be unpredictable. As a result, it can be observed that there exists a current and equitable probability of individuals adopting contrasting, accepting, or dismissing cultural transformations (Mesoudi, 2018). Accepting cultural differences plays a pivotal role in facilitating the successful integration of refugees by fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment within their host country. On the other hand, the inability to adapt to changes can result in adverse consequences that hinder the successful integration of refugees into societies in developing nations (Bhattarai, 2015).

Integration programmes have been implemented by many countries to provide housing for displaced refugees, indicating that they are not a recent phenomenon. A study was conducted by Heiligers in 2019, focusing on the process of resettling Bhutanese refugees in the Netherlands. The research revealed that the five most challenging aspects pertaining to integration encompassed the acquisition of the local language, substantial cultural disparities, the acquisition of rights and citizenship, access to education and employment opportunities, and the attainment of independence. The acquisition of employment and rights, familiarisation with the customs and traditions, as well as the acquisition of a new language, were found to pose significant challenges in the context of transitioning to a new country. Nevertheless, subsequent to being bestowed with legal entitlements and employment prospects, refugees experienced an enhanced sense of satisfaction, well-being, and stability (Heiligers, 2019).

According to Gharti's (2011) study, the integration policy index of Norway places significant emphasis on various metrics for integration, including but not limited to access to health and education services, promotion of family unity, provision of housing opportunities, facilitation of employment, prevention of discrimination, encouragement of political participation, and acquisition of nationality. The Bhutanese refugees required the fundamental rights of freedom of speech and religion to effectively assimilate into Norwegian society. According to a study conducted by Bhattarai (2014), individuals of Bhutanese refugee background residing in Norway for an extended duration exhibited proficiency in the Norwegian language, secured employment opportunities, and achieved self-sufficiency. The individuals persist in expressing apprehension regarding their cultural practises, traditional festivities, and ethical principles concurrently. However, it is their preference that the succeeding cohort be identified as Norwegians rather than being labelled as refugees.

The objective of collecting data on the challenges faced by refugees during the process of integrating into their host country is to ascertain the diverse barriers they encounter and assess the extent to which these barriers affect their integration. The provided data will contribute to enhancing the understanding of the challenges faced by refugees in Kristiansand during their process of integration into Norwegian society.

2.4 Social Integration.

In the field of sociology, the concept of social integration pertains to the dynamic process through which minority groups converge or undergo assimilation within a novel societal context (Brissette et al., 2000). Usually, societal norms are established to govern the expected patterns of public behaviour among individuals. The primary facets of the experiences of newcomers in the host society encompass social integration, economic integration, and cultural integration (Brissette et al., 2000).

Emile Durkheim, a prominent figure in the development of contemporary sociology, posited a theory of social integration wherein he argued that society exerts a significant influence on individuals. According to Durkheim (2010), this influence manifests through the establishment of collective consciousness, which encompasses shared norms, values, and modes of perception and conduct. The interconnection of individuals through a shared consciousness fosters social cohesion and facilitates the process of refugee integration within a host nation. Durkheim posits that social integration manifests through two distinct stages or solidarities, namely mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity. Mechanical solidarity serves as a unifying force that establishes connections among smaller groups or societies. In preindustrial societies, individuals exhibit robust social connections that are founded upon shared emotions and a collective ethical framework. On the other hand, organic solidarity arises as a consequence of the interdependence facilitated by the division of labour and the complementary nature of interpersonal relationships. According to Durkheim, the phenomenon of such integrations is commonly observed in modern industrialised societies. Solidarity is an essential element for the cohesion and preservation of unity within any given society (Kivisto, 2014).

Social integration is a valuable tool that aids in the attainment of specific objectives. It pertains to the arrangement of connections between individuals or groups (LLAVE and creation, 2010). According to Bourdieu et al. (2019), individuals who engage in the process of integration within

a communal setting exhibit elevated levels of trustworthiness and trust compared to those who do not possess these attributes. Therefore, the establishment of interpersonal connections within groups and institutions in a given society or nation may result in enhanced cooperation among individuals, thus promoting social integration (Bourdieu et al. 2019).

Research suggests that individuals tend to exhibit greater strength and resilience when they are socially connected and have access to social networks. These networks can serve as a valuable resource for establishing new relationships, particularly in unfamiliar environments (Rubin, 2012). Social integration refers to the establishment of consistent norms and practises, as well as the development of social bonds between different groups. According to Rubin, the process of eliminating isolation and providing access to various aspects of community life entails the integration of individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds, regardless of their race, religion, creed, or language.

According to Blau's (1960) argument, in cases where individuals within a group are naturally attracted to one another, social integration will ultimately dominate. Individuals who possess a desire to achieve complete integration within a community, group, or society encounter the expectation to establish a favourable impression among their peers (Amelina & Faist, 2008). However, on certain occasions, the resulting competition for popularity may give rise to defensive mechanisms that impede the process of social integration (Jackson et al., 2016). In conjunction with physical attributes, the factor of approachability may also exert influence on acceptance, as individuals who aspire to assimilate frequently endeavour to actively pursue and foster interpersonal connections. Social integration occurs when individuals within a social group are connected to both the group as a whole and to one another through various ties (Blau, 1960; Silk et al., 2009).

From a broader standpoint, social integration pertains to the extent to which immigrants assimilate into the local cultural norms, social connections, and daily routines. The measurement of this phenomenon is commonly assessed by examining linguistic patterns and cultural practices (Rubin et al., 2012). According to Strand and Ager (2010), social networks play a pivotal role in facilitating social integration. The statement refers to the establishment of social connections between immigrants and citizens of their host country, facilitated by the presence of shared language, culture, and other factors. Nevertheless, it is important to note that

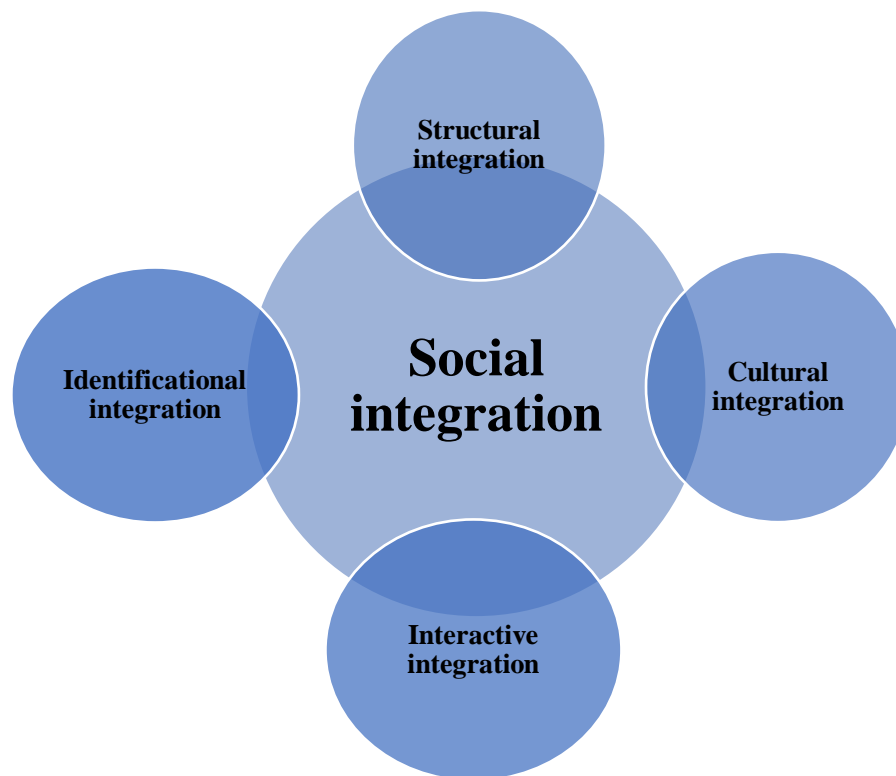
the absence of differences does not necessarily mean they do not exist; rather, it suggests that individuals have chosen to live together harmoniously (Rubin et al., 2012).

Therefore, the concept of "social integration" is comprehensive, encompassing not only the political and social connections that may be present in a receiving country, but also the cultural and economic connections. The objective of the cultural bridge is to facilitate the cultivation of mutual respect and comprehension in intercultural engagements and discourse. According to Zhou (2019), cultural bridges achieve growth and continually enhance their respective cultural systems. The economic bridge places particular emphasis on the host labour market. According to Zhou (2019), the calculation involves assessing the potential economic benefits that refugees may acquire in their host country, along with the specific advantages that arise from their social integration into the economy.

2.5 The Social Integration Framework

Heckmann (2005) explicated that the concept of social integration should be understood by considering four interconnected dimensions: structural, cultural, interactive, and identification. The attainment of one is inherently linked to the attainment of the other. Consequently, the examination of one dimension necessitates the simultaneous examination of another dimension (Heckmann & Bosswick, 2006; Heckmann, 2005; Heckmann & Schnapper, 2003). Conversely, the interrelationship among the four dimensions of social integration can be depicted as follows:

Figure 2: Social Integration Framework.



(Heckmann, 2005)

2.5.1 Structural Integration

In Bosswick and Heckmann's (2006, p.9) assertion, structural integration is defined as "the acquisition of rights and the access to position and status in the core institutions of the host society." Their socioeconomic status and the opportunities and resources available to them are determined by their access, representation, and meaningful participation in these core institutions, which include the legal system, the economy and labour market, the education and qualification systems, the housing system, the welfare state institutions (including the health system), and full political citizenship (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2006, p. 9; Heckmann, 2005). Additionally, differences in social norms, shared values, organisational structures, and welfare distribution all influence how an individual behaves in society and determine their level of integration (De Alcántara, 1995; Kısar Koramaz, 2014, p. 50).

2.5.2 Cultural Integration

Without an understanding of how society's fundamental institutions operate, participation in them is impossible. Only after gaining the fundamental knowledge and skills of the new culture

and society can refugees assert their rights, hold positions, and be granted status in it. Cultural integration pertains to the various stages and conditions of a person's shift in cognition, behaviour, and attitude that precede socialisation and encourage involvement and integration (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2006). Moreover, the process of cultural integration is reciprocal and interactive. It stresses how important it is for the host society to accept change and find new ways to interact with refugees and meet their needs, while also addressing the concerns of the refugees and their offspring as they adjust to the customs of the new society (Heckmann, 2005, p. 16). Bosswick and Heckmann contend that refugees do not relinquish their native cultural elements; rather, their bicultural competencies and personalities serve as assets for both the individual and the receiving society.

2.5.3 Interactive integration

Interactive integration, as defined by Bosswick and Heckmann (2006, p. 10), pertains to the acceptance and inclusion of refugees within the primary relationships and social networks of the host society. In order to evaluate integration at the interactive level, it is important to have a comprehensive understanding of the attributes of social networks, relationships, and connections within society, as well as their functioning mechanisms (Kısar Koramaz, 2014, p. 50). Interactive integration necessitates specific foundational elements of cultural integration, particularly the development of "communicative competences" (Heckmann, 2005, p. 17).

Moreover, interpersonal interactions within private or primary groups, such as friendships, partnerships, marriages, networks, and affiliations with local communities through voluntary organisation membership, serve as indicators of interactive integration. Refugees may experience initial advantages from their association and engagement with their own ethnic group within the social framework; however, over time, this dynamic may have detrimental consequences. The potential for the refugee to encounter challenges in establishing and fostering relationships within the host community is a possibility. Refugees may encounter difficulties in obtaining the necessary cultural and social capital to effectively participate in the predominant institutions of the host country if they are confined to their own ethnic enclave (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2006).

2.5.4 Identification integration.

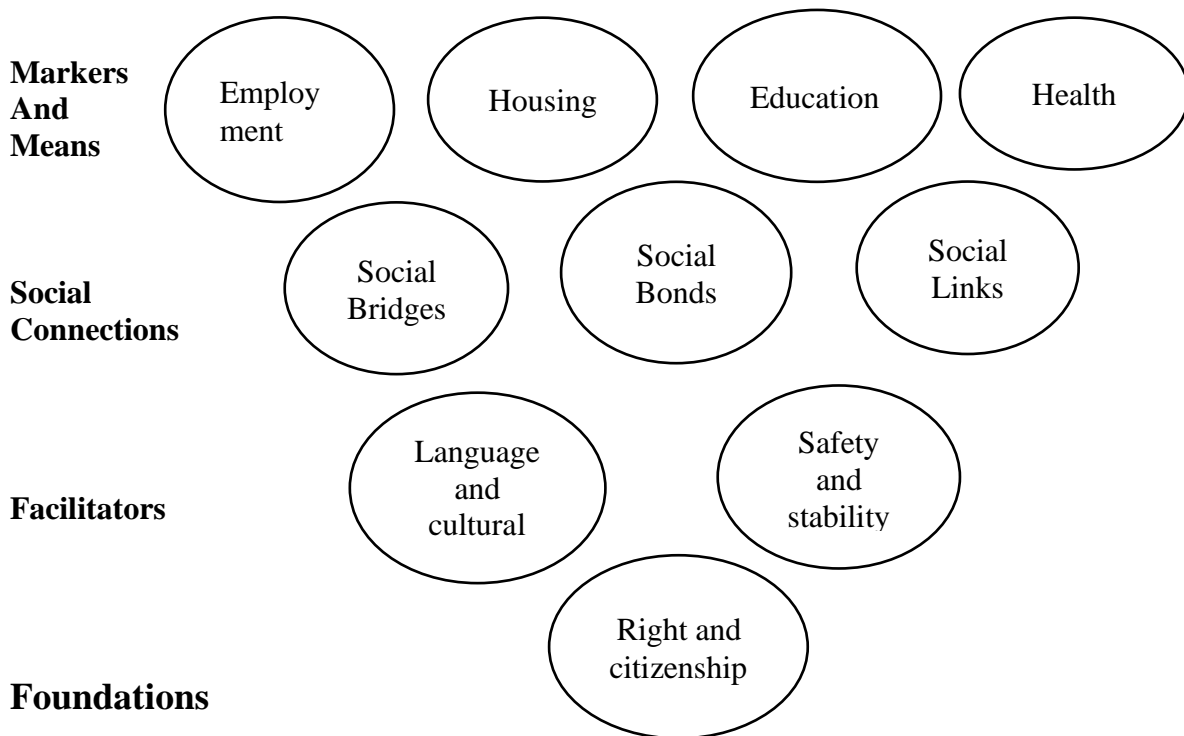
The concept of identification integration was previously believed to be restricted to the gradual displacement of the ethnic identity of the minority group by that of the majority group (Heckmann, 2005). Conversely, contemporary identity studies have shifted their attention towards various aspects of identification. Consequently, there has been a shift in the understanding of the identities of refugees and their offspring, with a growing recognition of the multifaceted nature of these identities. This shift entails a departure from the previous emphasis on the diminishing, preservation, or substitution of ethnic identity with the national identity of the country hosting the refugees (Nimmerfeldt, 2009, p. 28). As an example, the concept of identification integration, as posited by Heckman et al., refers to the stage in which a refugee establishes a sense of belonging and connection to the host society. This is particularly evident in their affiliation with ethnic, local, regional, and/or national groups. The conceptual framework prioritises the cultivation of a sense of affiliation with diverse social groups over the formation of ethnic-cultural identity. Identification integration refers to an individual's perception of themselves as part of a larger group or their affiliation with a societal structure (Heckmann, 2005).

The development of a collective sense of identity, commonly referred to as a "we-feeling," is influenced by both cognitive and emotional factors, as described by Heckmann (2005, p. 9). This sense of belonging is a key component in the emergence of such identification. The process of integration undoubtedly encompasses the acquisition of knowledge, and it is imperative that both the refugee population and the host society are afforded sufficient time to adapt and accommodate to one another. According to Bosswick and Heckmann (2006) as well as Heckmann, Heckmann, and Schnapper (2003), the concept of inclusion within a new society is acknowledged through the subjective sense of belonging and identification with different societal groups. These groups can encompass ethnic, regional, local, national, or even complex combinations thereof.

Ager and Strang (2008) also proposed a conceptual framework for successfully integrating refugees into a new homeland. Markers and means, social connection, facilitation, and foundation are the four categories that these domains are divided into. Markers and means are a variety of public areas that serve as indicators of successful integration of refugees into their new homeland. These domains correspond to the eight policy-areas that are part of the EU

states' Migrant-Integration-Policy-Index (MIPEX), which they use to gauge integration. Employment, housing, education, and health are important areas within markers and means. Employment is one of the most important aspects of refugees' integration into their new homeland. Employment is directly related to economic independence and future planning, meeting members of society, and providing opportunities to restore self-esteem and self-reliance (Gidley & Oliver, 2015). Getting a job in a new country can be difficult in some cases because of things like previous work experiences and qualifications not being recognised. As a result, a lot of refugees find it difficult to find work in their new country. Due to this, the ability of refugees to find employment directly affects their ability to successfully integrate into their new country (Ager & Strang, 2008).

Figure 3: Conceptual framework of integration by Ager and Strang (2008).



Conceptual Model Outlining the Main Integration Domains (Ager & Strang, 2008).

A strong association exists between the housing conditions of refugees and their mental and physical well-being. There exists a correlation between the accommodation of refugees and the surrounding housing environment, which gives rise to various concerns. The relationship between housing and well-being has been established, highlighting the crucial importance of providing refugees with housing in order to facilitate their successful integration into their host

country (Gidley & Oliver, 2015). Education plays a crucial role in fostering the acquisition of skills and competencies necessary for future employment, thereby facilitating the integration of refugees into society and enabling them to actively contribute to their host communities. The educational outcomes of refugees are directly influenced by factors such as isolation, exclusion, and insufficient support for language acquisition in their host country (Ager & Strang, 2008).

Therefore, it is necessary to provide refugees with the necessary assistance and support to assess the quality of prospective career and educational prospects. Education plays a significant role in facilitating the integration of refugees into their host country. The correlation between a refugee's capacity to effectively assimilate into a novel societal context and sustain optimal health is significant. The capacity of refugees to engage and participate in the community is influenced by their capacity to fulfil their social, emotional, and psychological health-related requirements through the availability of health services (Gidley & Oliver, 2015). This study examines and measures all four domains (work, education, housing, and health) as they are interconnected with markers and means of social and economic well-being, which in turn are linked to the sustainable development goals. This will enhance the understanding of the process of integrating refugees into society and the interrelationships between the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Social Connections

Ager and Strang (2008) extensively integrated Putnam's (2000) concepts of social capital into their theoretical framework to outline the fundamental components of social connection, specifically referred to as social "links," "bonds," and "bridges." There exists a correlation between refugees and state structures through social connections. Social networks, also known as social bonds, are commonly referred to as the connections that exist among individuals within a given society (Schwarzer, Hahn, & Schröder, 1994; McNeill, Kreuter, & Subramanian, 2006). These factors encompass familial ties, ethnocultural communities, and local organisations that foster resource and information sharing. They also contribute to emotional support, self-esteem, and confidence (Atfield et al., 2007 as cited in Strang & Ager, 2010, p. 597).

Additionally, the concept of "maintaining cultural integrity" is emphasised (Berry, 1997; Phillimore & Goodson, 2008, p. 312). Social bridges are also associated with the concepts of inclusion and engagement within the host community. This can be observed through shared

interests in areas such as politics, religion, sports, or the workplace. The individuals may engage in informal discussions pertaining to meaningful friendships or relationships that are founded upon trust. Campbell and Lee (1992) and Mitchell and Trickett (1980) have posited that social networks fulfil a multitude of functions, encompassing social support, attachment, communication, and shared values.

Facilitators

Facilitators are entities that actively promote and facilitate the process of local integration. Facilitators play a crucial role in fostering effective communication and understanding between individuals from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Proficiency in language and cultural knowledge, along with ensuring safety and stability, are key factors that contribute to the facilitators' effectiveness. Language proficiency is a crucial aspect of "cultural competence" when it comes to successfully reintegrating into a new society. One can observe a specific role of language in the context of social interaction. The issue of effective communication and cultural understanding between host and refugee communities is widely acknowledged as a substantial challenge (Ager & Strang, 2008). In addition, it is worth noting that power is intricately linked to language and cultural knowledge, as highlighted by Clegg (1989). Refugees lacking proficiency in the predominant language encounter obstacles in accessing enhanced economic and social prospects, as well as experiencing limitations in their ability to engage with the power dynamics within the host society (Shields & Price, 2002; Dustmann & Fabbri, 2003).

According to Vaara et al. (2005), the ability to speak the language fluently enhances the capacity of refugee workers to establish more robust social connections within the organisation, as it grants them greater opportunities to engage in both formal and informal modes of communication. However, individuals who possess a restricted level of competence in the native language often encounter exclusion from participation in decision-making procedures and access to information networks (Marschan-Piekkari, Welch, & Welch, 1999).

Foundation

The fundamental elements of integration encompass two essential aspects, namely, rights and citizenship (Ager & Strang, 2008). The definitions of rights, citizenship, and nationhood may vary across different countries. Therefore, it is important for the government to formulate and

implement proficient integration strategies by explicitly delineating policies pertaining to citizenship and the concept of nationhood (Ager & Strang, 2008). Successful integration is contingent upon the recognition and prioritisation of fundamental principles such as human dignity, freedom of cultural choice, and equality. This domain is included in the current study due to its relevance in supporting the empowerment of refugees towards the realisation of their maximum capabilities (Gidley & Oliver, 2015). According to Bosswick and Heckmann (2006), as refugees become integrated into the primary institutions of society, they experience a gradual sense of belonging.

Heckmann (2005) contends that the emergence of a sense of belongingness primarily occurs during the later stages of integration. Ager and Strang argue that integration can be identified through the active "mixing" of individuals from different groups and the absence of conflict and "toleration" at a fundamental level. This entailed the presence of commonly held principles, a profound regard for one another, intimate companionships, and familial connections. Moreover, it can be argued that these shared values provide a more comprehensive structure within which individuals experience a sense of inclusion, without undermining diversity, individuality, and one's group identity (Ager & Strang, 2008, pp. 177-178).

Entzinger (2000) identifies three key factors that influence immigration and integration processes: the state, the market, and the nation. These dimensions, as highlighted by Entzinger, play a significant role in shaping these processes. By prioritising these dimensions, such as cultururation, placement, interaction, and identification, we can redirect our attention from refugees themselves to their connection with the host society. The inquiry encompasses not only the actions of refugees, their social interactions, and their self-identification, but also the extent to which they are embraced and their positioning within each of our three dimensions (Penninx, 2005).

The legal-political dimension pertains to the rights and statuses related to residency and political matters. The fundamental inquiry at hand pertains to the degree to which refugees are considered as fully integrated participants of the political community. A refugee's position or "degree of integration" can be categorised into two distinct extremes. One such position is that of an irregular immigrant who, in the legal-political sense, is not considered part of the host society, although they may be integrated in other aspects. The other aspect pertains to the status of the immigrant or refugee, specifically whether they have acquired or are currently holding

citizenship in the host country (Penninx, 2005). There is a wide range of diversity in between, which has grown in recent years due to European states' efforts to control international migration and the establishment of different statuses and rights under the EU migration system (Entzinger 2000; Hammar, 2004).

The socio-economic dimension pertains to the social and economic status of individuals, regardless of their nationality. Within this realm, the status of refugees or immigrants can be examined by assessing their ability to enter and engage in areas that are essential for all inhabitants. Do refugees or immigrants possess equitable access to institutional resources for employment, housing, education, and healthcare? Are these facilities utilised by them? What is the result of refugees' involvement in comparison to that of natives who have similar or equivalent qualifications? (Entzinger, 2000). Given that needs and aspirations in these fields are generally applicable, the comparative measurement of access and involvement of both refugees and natives in these domains is feasible. The results, especially when they are inequitable, offer valuable insights for policy-making ((Penninx, 2005; Goeman, 2012).

The cultural-religious dimension refers to the realm of beliefs and customs of refugees or immigrants and the host society, as well as their mutual responses to differences and diversity. If newcomers perceive themselves as distinct and are perceived by the host society as having cultural or religious differences, they may strive to attain a recognised position in these aspects. The receiving society may exhibit varying degrees of acceptance towards cultural or religious diversity (Entzinger, 2000). Once again, we encounter two contrasting extremes. On one end of the spectrum, there is a possibility of rejecting new diversity and imposing a demand for refugees or immigrants to conform and integrate into societies that have a single culture and religion. In pluralistic societal systems, ethnic identities, cultures, and worldviews are embraced and acknowledged as being of equal importance. Within this spectrum, there exist various intermediate stances, including the acceptance of specific types of diversity in private domains, while not fully or only partially accepting them in public domains (Penninx, 2015).

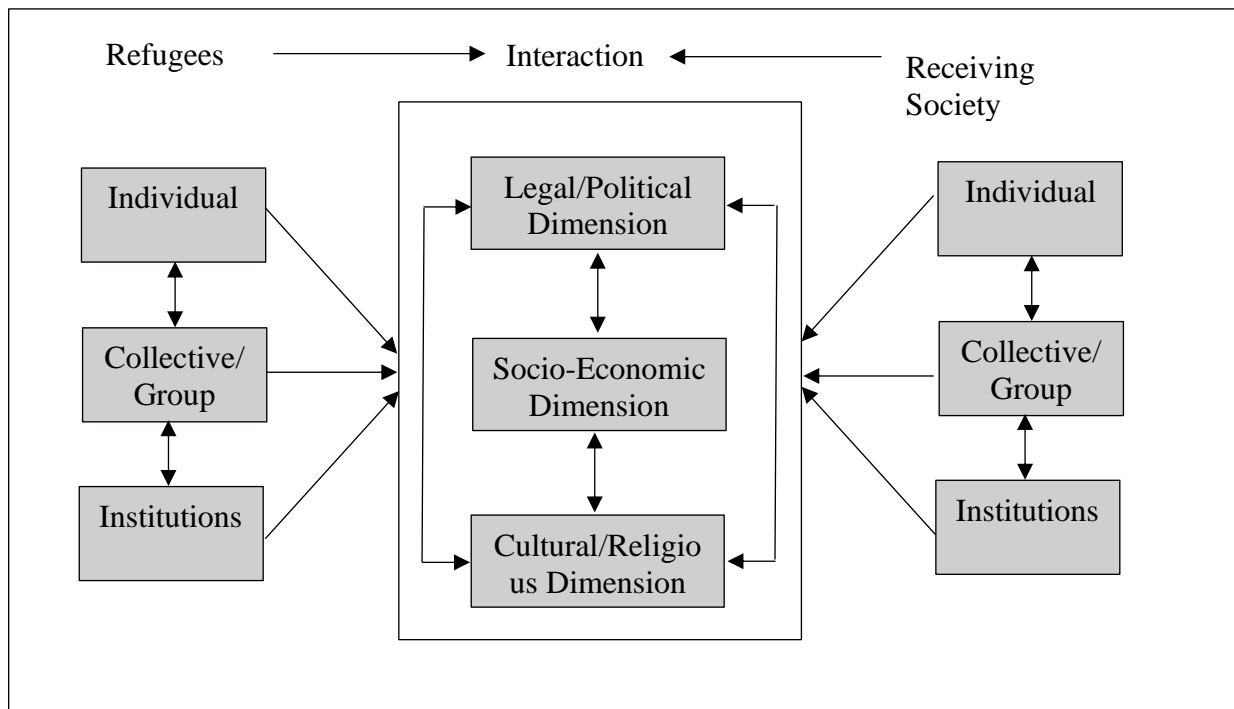
The measurement of this third dimension, which involves the precise locations of refugees and immigrant groups, presents greater challenges primarily due to two reasons. Primarily, the focus is not so much on objective distinctions and variety in terms of ethnicity, culture, and religion, but rather on the subjective interpretations and mutual assessments of what is considered as different, and the resulting implications of these classifications. Categorizations have the

potential to transform into stereotypes, biases, and ultimately contribute to unchangeable racist ideologies (Entzinger, 2000; Penninx, 2005). Furthermore, the foundation of categorizations may undergo alterations. During the guest worker period from 1960 to 1975, the significance of the growing number of Muslim immigrant workers was not considered important. Starting in the 1990s, migrants and their families from Muslim countries began to be officially classified as such. Furthermore, classifications and mutual understandings exhibit distinct variations across various levels, such as the individual, collective, and institutional levels. Additionally, the outcomes resulting from these variations may also diverge. If interpersonal connections are influenced by bias, the resulting interactions may be unpleasant, but their consequences are restricted in scope. However, when institutions rely on stereotypical or biased perceptions and procedures to recruit workers, it can have highly detrimental effects on individual immigrants or refugees (Penninx, 2015).

It is crucial to acknowledge that these three dimensions are not completely autonomous from each other. The legal-political dimension has the potential to influence both the socio-economic and cultural-religious dimensions. From the standpoint of individual immigrants or refugees, factors such as residing illegally, enduring prolonged uncertainty regarding future residency rights (especially for asylum seekers who rely on charity or state support for extended periods) and facing limited access to local resources and services (Penninx, 2015).

National political systems and decision-making processes have adverse consequences for opportunities and participation in the socio-economic and political domains. Exclusionary policies, from the viewpoint of the receiving society, are a manifestation of the overall perception of refugees as outsiders, which inevitably hinders the integration of immigrants. The cultural-religious aspect can also influence the socio-economic aspect, as depicted by an additional arrow in the figure below. For instance, when certain refugees are viewed negatively, it can result in prejudice and discrimination from individuals, organisations, or institutions in the host society. This can then limit the opportunities available to refugees, even if they have legal guarantees, in areas such as housing, education, healthcare, and the job market (Penninx, 2005; 2015).

Figure 4: Three-Way Process Conception of Integration by Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx (2016)



2.6 Theoretical Overview

2.6.1 The Social Capital Theory.

According to Durkheim (2010), social integration is a consequence of social capital. Social capital is a term used to describe the quantity and nature of individuals' connections with both their peers and their communities. Putnam (2000) extensively examines the dynamics of individuals' interactions with diverse services, institutions, and systems. The utilisation of the concept of social capital enables a comprehensive understanding of the interconnections that exist between communities or organisations (Stone, 2003). The concept being referred to is a social network characterised by the principles of reciprocity and trust, as described by Cook (2005). The influence of social connections on individuals' ability to collaborate in addressing shared challenges and reaching mutually advantageous outcomes has been noted (Stone, 2003). Consequently, it can serve as a mechanism for collective engagement that has the potential to yield diverse outcomes (Lin, 2017).

Furthermore, the concept of social capital offers a fresh and innovative viewpoint on the process of social integration. Durkheim (2010) posits that the establishment of shared standards, beliefs, and identities rooted in trust facilitates the convergence and interpersonal connection of individuals and groups, fostering the development of cohesive social networks. According to Putnam (2000), social capital refers to the attributes of social entities such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate the facilitation of coordination and cooperation for the purpose of mutual advantage. According to Stone (2003), the fundamental elements of integration encompass the establishment of mutual trust and the adherence to standards of mutual benefit. The complexity associated with the conceptualization of social integration necessitates the utilisation of social capital as a valuable framework for the measurement of social integration (Cook, 2005).

Bourdieu (2011) asserts that social capital can be understood as the aggregate of tangible or intangible assets that an individual possesses, which are linked to their membership in enduring networks of established relationships characterised by mutual knowledge or acknowledgment. Bourdieu posits that social capital is among a range of capital types, including economic, cultural, and symbolic. The concept of social capital primarily centres around the notion of possessing the ability to obtain and utilise various resources (Furseth, 2008).

The concept of social capital encompasses various elements such as social networks, trustworthiness, and reciprocity-related standards, as discussed by Putnam (2000) and Szreter and Woolcock (2004). Social organisations possess a set of attributes referred to as social capital, which can enhance the efficiency of a society by facilitating the coordination of collective endeavours (Coleman, 1990). According to Herreros (2004), interpersonal relationships have the potential to facilitate the transfer of trust as they cultivate it within direct personal interactions. The establishment of interpersonal relationships facilitates the development of trust among individuals. Over the course of time, the trust gradually extends to encompass a broader social trust, thereby exerting a substantial influence on contemporary societies of considerable magnitude (Furseth, 2008).

Social capital is a valuable resource that actors can utilise to actualize their interests. According to Coleman and society (1994), in order for social capital to flow, there is a need for the transformation of interpersonal relationships. The organisation will be able to achieve greater

outcomes as a consequence of cultivating trust-based relationships, surpassing what would be possible otherwise. Coleman adds that the primary and most crucial factor for growth and production is the level of connectivity that exists among individuals and groups.

MacDonald and Stokes (2006) are of the view that social capital exhibits distinct characteristics that set it apart from other forms of capital that are deeply embedded within the network of interpersonal connections. The perception of success in group interactions is contingent upon the presence of trust, which becomes particularly evident within a group when its members exhibit trustworthiness through the manifestation of substantial confidence in each other. Consequently, social capital is perceived as a valuable resource that possesses moral qualities, facilitating enhanced cooperation among individuals or collectives. Nonprofit organisations are inherently linked to the cultivation of dedication and the enhancement of trust.

The inclusion of a network of connections among individuals and organisations within a given society is deemed essential in the conceptualization of social capital (Furseth & Society, 2008; Lin, 2017). Consequently, it is imperative that society possesses the ability to establish connections between individuals who may differ significantly from one another. The level of ease with which individuals integrate into their families, religious communities, and political spheres is the determining factor (MacDonald & Stokes, 2006).

The significance of social capital as a fundamental element of social integration cannot be overstated. As previously mentioned, social capital gives rise to various attributes within social structures, such as networks of friendships, trust, norms, and resources. These attributes facilitate cooperation and collective efforts among individuals for mutual advantages. As stated by Furseth (2008), there is potential for its transformation into a trust with expanded authority. According to Lin (2017), the prioritisation of socialisation within the framework of social capital can sometimes manifest as civic engagement, as individuals strive to attain collective benefits within society. Hence, in Putnam's (2000) assertion social capital plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' perceptions of others' behaviours, leading to the development of more grounded and practical expectations.

Szreter and Woolcock (2004) undertook a comprehensive categorization of social capital, identifying three primary types: bonding, bridging, and linking social capital. When individuals within a network perceive themselves as sharing a common social identity, a form of social

capital known as bonding social capital emerges as a consequence of their reciprocal trust and collaborative behaviour. Linking social capital can be defined as the establishment of norms of respect and the formation of networks of trusting relationships among individuals who engage in interactions across distinct power or authority gradients within a given society. In contrast, bridging social capital refers to the establishment of connections characterised by respect and mutual understanding among individuals who are aware of their social identity differences. Establishing relationships with individuals from diverse networks can provide individuals with opportunities and connections to organisations that offer access to a wide range of resources.

The fundamental theoretical framework for this research will be social integration, which will be explored through the lens of social capital. The present study aims to examine the extent to which refugees are socially integrated in connections with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically focusing on economic status, education, and healthcare systems. These domains are considered fundamental components of the SDGs.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction.

This chapter provides explanation of the methodological choices that were chosen and how they were implemented for the execution of this research. The research paradigm employed in this study was rooted in interpretivism and constructionism, while the research strategy utilized a blend of both inductive and deductive approaches. Second, I present a detailed explanation of the research methodology, research framework, and research approaches. Subsequently, I discuss the procedure of acquiring data via qualitative interviews, the methodology for scrutinising the data, the ethical considerations in the research, and the challenges encountered during the investigation.

3.1 Epistemological and Ontological Considerations.

This study is grounded in epistemological and ontological paradigms, with the aim of rigorously selecting pertinent knowledge and its corresponding social realities. Ontology focuses on the actual and objective existence of the world, while epistemology aims to understand this world and the various potential forms that knowledge about it can take (Della Porta and Keating, 2008, p. 21). Epistemology is commonly understood as a philosophical framework that explores the nature and scope of knowledge (Blaikie, 2000; Bryman, 2016; Walliman, 2018). Della Porta and Keating (2008) discuss epistemology, which pertains to the nature of knowledge and how we acquire it. The distinction lies in the fact that researchers are obligated to provide justifications in order to persuade others, setting it apart from mere belief (Clark et al. 2021). Bryman (2016, p. 24) formulates this definition by emphasising knowledge as the central component of a discipline and raising the inquiry of what should be deemed and acknowledged. Similarly, according to Walliman (2018), epistemology can be defined as a methodology that examines the process of acquiring knowledge and determining what is considered valid and acceptable within a particular field of study. The epistemological approach encompasses three distinct positions: positivism, realism, and interpretivism (Bryman, 2016, pp. 24-28).

While there may be some minor areas of overlap, these three epistemological positions are fundamentally distinct from one another in terms of their logical underpinnings and their application to research. Positivism is closely associated with the natural sciences. Bryman

(2016) states that this position applies the methodologies and principles of the natural sciences to investigate social phenomena. According to Myers (2020), positivism aims to test theories in order to enhance our ability to predict and understand phenomena. On the other hand, realism suggests that there is a reality that exists independently of our interpretations, and it provides researchers with tools and opportunities for theoretical speculation (Bryman, 2016, p. 695). This position pertains to the categories formulated by scientists and their application to tangible entities in the realms of nature and society (Clark et al. 2021). Interpretivism focuses on understanding the personal and subjective significance of social actions (Bryman, 2016). Della Porta and Keating (2008) assert that the focal point of this approach is the significance of the subject. This perspective suggests that individuals' perceptions of the external world contribute to their comprehension of social phenomena or historical events (Della Porta & Keating, 2008; Bryman 2016).

The definition of ontology, as stated by Della Porta and Keating (2008) in the first paragraph, appears to be comprehensive in nature, encompassing the entirety of the world and its various interactions. Bryman (2016) provides a definition of that centres on the characteristics of social entities with a higher level of focus on social interactions. Similar to Blaikie (2000) who discusses the presence of social phenomena while establishing the concept of ontology. The ontological approach is characterised by two opposing positions: objectivism and constructivism. The first position involves determining whether social realities should be regarded as objective realities that exist independently of social actors. The second position involves determining whether these social realities should be seen as social constructions that are formed through the perceptions and actions of social actors (Bryman, 2016, p. 28). According to the second position, social phenomena and their meanings are not solely created through social interactions but are also consistently carried out by social actors and regularly modified.

Based on the objectives of the study, I have determined that interpretivism and constructivism are the most suitable epistemological and ontological stances. The interpretivist stance enabled me to gain a profound comprehension of the social realities experienced by individuals from a subjective standpoint, by exploring their explanations and delving into their perspectives. This approach is rooted in the significance of subjective meaning (Della Porta & Keating, 2008).

Employing the constructivist perspective in this study has facilitated my observation and meticulous exploration of social phenomena that emerge from social interactions.

3.1.1 Positionality and Reflexivity.

Positionality, as defined by Jafar (2018, p. 323), pertains to the act of declaring and acknowledging one's own position within an academic work. Positionality refers to the influence of the researcher's background and the research setting on which the study is conducted. Hence, according to Jafar (2018, p. 323), it is crucial to address the positionality when communicating the results of a study to the readers, as the significance and reliability of any research findings may be compromised without this consideration.

Regarding the positionality of this study, as previously stated in chapter 1, I am an international student from Ghana. In Ghana, there is lack of effective policies for integrating refugees, particularly at the Budumburam refugee camp. As a result, refugees and their children are forced to sell goods on the streets of Accra to survive. Furthermore, as an international student in Norway, I have encountered instances of discrimination when it comes to job opportunities and access to healthcare. To be candid, my experiences have influenced my perspectives on integration and matters concerning refugees or immigrants, but also not forgetting the relevance of scientific positionality in shaping the lens through which this research is approached.

Reflexivity, as described by Jafar (2018, p. 324), refers to the process of self-reflection that takes into account how one's own opinions, values, and actions influence the generation, analysis, and interpretation of data. Reflexivity, as highlighted by Teh and Lek (2018) and cited in Dodgson's 2019 study, is considered the benchmark for assessing the excellence and reliability of research. Reflexivity, in precise terms, demonstrates how the researcher's positionality had an impact on the study and how the researcher is aware of this. My personal experiences played a role in shaping the interview guides and choosing the participants in this study. As an example, I had to conduct interviews with refugees whom I had previously been in contact with during my time residing in Kristiansand.

Hence, I aim to inform the prospective readers about the potential influence of my personal demographic characteristics, experiences, and subjective perceptions on this research study and its conclusions. Simultaneously, it is important to acknowledge that I presented a well-rounded

viewpoint by implementing the most suitable strategies. Likewise, I did not steer interviews towards a response that aligns with my own subjective preferences. Conversely, my positionality also had numerous advantages. Specifically, my understanding of the context allowed me to effectively engage with a larger number of respondents. Similarly, establishing trust with respondents proved to be beneficial.

3.2 Research Method.

The process of incorporating refugees into society for the purpose of promoting inclusivity and long-term sustainability has consistently been a multifaceted matter that necessitates thorough study in order to gain more understanding. Due to my interest in the social integration of refugees for inclusive and sustainable development, I opted to utilise qualitative research methods for this project. Clark et al. (2021) state that qualitative research seeks to explore not only the significance of individuals' lives, but also, and most importantly, how they are encountered in actual circumstances. Bryman (2016, p. 374) highlights that qualitative research focuses more on words, meaning, and understanding, as opposed to quantitative research which relies on numerical data. The research strategy discussed is predominantly interpretivist and constructionist, emphasising epistemological and ontological factors (Clark et al., 2021). Creswell (2014) views qualitative research as a demanding task for researchers, involving the pursuit of three primary goals: transparency, methodology, and adherence to evidence, among others. Qualitative research enables the researcher to examine and comprehend the everyday experiences of diverse individuals and their thoughts within various contexts. I have chosen to utilise a qualitative research method for this project, as it aligns well with my objective of exploring and comprehending the integration policies and programmes for refugees as well as obstacles associated with the integration of refugees for the purpose of fostering inclusive and sustainable development. Additionally, I aim to explore the experiences of refugees in terms of their social integration within the community of Kristiansand.

Creswell (2014), Bryman (2016, p.40), and Clark et al. (2021) provide definitions of a research method as a systematic approach for gathering data. In order to accomplish this, the researcher utilises a particular tool, such as a self-administered questionnaire or structured interview in quantitative research, or participant observation in qualitative research, where the researcher actively listens to and observes others (Creswell, 2014). For this study, I decided to use the qualitative method, specifically in-depth interviews conducted in a semi-structured style and

document analyses. This approach allowed me to create a platform for meaningful dialogue, enabling me to delve into the ideas and perspectives of immigrant refugees regarding their experiences with integration and integration policies in Norway. Additionally, I aimed to investigate the challenges faced by institutions responsible for the integration of refugees.

3.3 Research Strategies.

Clark et al. (2021) categorises research methods into two distinct groups within the social sciences. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, quantitative research involves the analysis and collection of data through quantification or measurement, while qualitative research primarily emphasises the use of words. Creswell (2014) defines research strategy as a broad approach to the execution of social research. To thoroughly examine documents relating to integration policies, difficulties of incorporating refugees into inclusive and sustainable development, as well as understanding refugees' experiences during social integration, I have determined that utilising qualitative research methods would be more advantageous for this thesis.

There are two primary epistemological methodologies in research: induction and deduction (Bernard, 2011; Bryman, 2016; Clark et al. 2021). By selecting qualitative research as the methodological foundation of this study, I employed an inductive approach, thereby establishing the research strategy for this project. Blaikie (2000) states that data collection is the initial step in the inductive research strategy, which is then followed by the development of generalisations using inductive logic. The central focus lies in the connection between theory and research, rather than simply testing theories as is done in the deductive approach of quantitative research (Bryman, 2016, pp. 32-33; Clark et al. 2021).

In the previous chapter, I utilised the deductive approach by drawing upon established theoretical concepts through a comprehensive review of existing literature. This involved comparing my research to previous studies in the same field as a point of reference. Therefore, this research is bi-strategic, taking into account the empirical results as a strategic foundation and the pre-existing theories as the backdrop. While the primary methodology employed in this work is the inductive approach, the deductive approach also holds significance in terms of juxtaposing empirical data with existing literature review. According to Bryman (2016), induction and deduction are two interconnected methodologies. The inductive strategy minimises deduction, while the deduction incorporates an element of induction. Bernard (2011)

concur with the notion that genuine research is never exclusively inductive or deductive. When a research project is grounded in either the induction or deduction epistemological approaches, it has a direct or indirect impact on certain aspects of the other approach (Clark et al. 2021).

3.4 Research Design.

Clark et al. (2021, p. 39) state that the data collection and analysis in a research study rely on the framework established by the research design. Hence, the choice of research design should align with the specific emphasis placed on various aspects of the research procedure (Bryman, 2012, p. 39). Blaikie (2009, p. 15) also discusses the choice of research design in their study. According to his explanation, "research design is a comprehensive declaration and rationale for the technical choices made in the process of planning a research project."

Additionally, as highlighted by Bryman (2012) and Creswell (2014), there exist five distinct research designs: experimental design, cross-sectional design, longitudinal design, case study design, and comparative design. Out of the five designs, the case study design seems to be the most suitable research design for this study because Clark et al. (2021) state that the case study design specifically addresses the intricacy and unique characteristics of the case under investigation.

As stated in the introductory chapter, refugees play a crucial role in global sustainable development issues. It is important to examine integration policies, the challenges of integrating refugees into host societies, and the experiences of refugees during the process of social integration. Hence, this study focused on examining the social integration of refugees in Norway, specifically in Kristiansand, to promote inclusive and sustainable development. The research involved conducting interviews with both the institutions responsible for refugee integration and the refugees themselves as well as analysing policy documents to see the integration policies for refugees.

3.5 Sampling Methods.

The selected sample for the study is a representative subset of the entire population upon which the entire study is founded. Hence, the sampling technique plays a crucial role in determining the quality of a study. As stated by Clark et al. (2021, p. 166), a sample refers to a smaller yet

ideally representative portion of a larger whole or population. However, given the nature and objective of a qualitative research study, it should possess the capacity to comprehend the context and underlying factors of the research problem, rather than making broad generalisations based on the findings (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2014). More precisely, a key objective of conducting a qualitative research study is to comprehend how identified causes (factors) of a particular issue (research problem) impact the lives or experiences of individuals.

Therefore, in this study, I opted for a sampling technique that enables me to obtain the most appropriate sample for investigating social integration of refugees for inclusive and sustainable development. Thus, this study employed purposive sampling and snowball sampling, both of which fall under the category of non-probability sampling, as the sampling techniques (Clark et al. 2021). I employed purposive sampling to strategically select participants based on their ability to provide relevant information for the study, rather than using a random selection method. Institutions responsible for social integration of refugees in Kristiansand were purposively sampled. Similarly, I opted for snowball sampling to recruit refugees as part of the study. Initially, I deliberately chose institutions in Norway responsible for integration of refugees to examine the challenges and facilitators of integrating refugees for inclusive and sustainable development. Subsequently, some institutions on my list were replaced after my interviews with the refugees. This was done because they mentioned institutions that were crucial in the integration process than I thought and therefore, the need to add them. Bryman (2012, p. 427) highlights those mixed methods, such as purposive sampling and snowball sampling, are frequently employed in research studies due to their ability to enable researchers to access a wider range of respondents.

3.5.1 Inclusion Criteria for Respondents

Refugees

❖ **Should be above 18 years with the ability to speak English.**

This requirement is driven by two primary factors. Firstly, it is considered unethical to involve minors in the study, and also, refugees below the age of 18 years are not part of the introduction programme. Secondly, I did not want to involve respondents who do not have a clear understanding of my research objectives neither did I want to rely on translators who might

misinterpret my research objectives and questions to respondents. Such a situation could negatively influence my data.

❖ **Should be living in Norway for at least six months to four years.**

The integration programme for the majority of refugees lasts a maximum of four years. Consequently, this research suggests that refugees would have commenced the integration programme within the first six months of their arrival in Norway. Choosing respondents during this specific time period will improve the quality of the data collected.

❖ **Should have a legal stay in Norway.**

This study focused on refugees who have been legally accepted in Norway. Integration into society can only be achieved through this method. Selecting any refugee beyond this scope does not contribute any relevant information to the data based on the study's objectives. Based on this inclusion criteria, I was able to recruit nine refugees from Kristiansand to understand their experiences of social integration.

3.5.2 Inclusion Criteria for Institutions.

In my assessment, I considered the Norwegian Directorate of Integration (IMDi) to be crucial in addressing matters related to policies and legislation regarding integration. Based on this, it was necessary to conduct interviews with them concerning the challenges and opportunities associated with the integration of refugees in a broader context. IMDi, however, needed to have permission from the government to grant the interview, and therefore opted out. Furthermore, the selection of any other institution was solely based on the recommendations from refugees. In the initial phase of my interviews with refugees, I requested them to enumerate the essential institutions that have played a central role in their integration process since their arrival in Norway. The refugees were requested to prioritise and provide a list of institutions, from which two were chosen for further interviews. The institutions that emerged as integral in the integration process according to refugees were the Red Cross and the Kristiansand municipality. Even though the Red Cross in Kristiansand acknowledged the significance of my research topic, it was difficult to get an interview. To get an insight into integration work done in Red Cross, I decided to recruit respondents from the Red Cross in Oslo, while waiting for respondents in Kristiansand. I also interviewed a representative from the Norway Multicultural Center to understand the challenges, and the opportunities of

integrating refugees for inclusive and sustainable development, as seen from voluntary actors. With time I also got to interview three people, which two of them had worked as volunteers in Red Cross Kristiansand, and the last one had a permanent position. I was also able to interview a representative from Kristiansand Municipality. In all, I was able to recruit eight respondents for the purpose of understanding the opportunities and the challenges of integrating refugees for inclusive and sustainable development from actors considered important by the refugees themselves.

3.5.3 Inclusion criteria for document analyses

❖ Policy Relevance

The documents must explicitly discuss the social integration policies implemented for refugees in Norway. It should also be directed towards promoting inclusive and sustainable development.

❖ Geographical Focus

Only policies enacted within the territorial limits of Norway will be considered. I took into account national, regional, and local policies that are pertinent to social integration.

❖ Time Frame

Documents published or enacted from 2004 to the present are selected to ensure their relevance to current context.

❖ Types of Policies

Only governmental policies, regulations, strategic plans, white papers, and official guidelines are analysed. Official reports from reputable non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international bodies such as UNHCR that specifically addresses integration issues in the the Norwegian context are also examined

❖ Language

Only documents provided in English are examined as I do not understand Norwegian.

3.5.4 Justification for inclusion criteria

In terms of policy relevance I wanted to ensure that my data analyses remain solely focused on the subject of interest. Again, geographical and time frame was important to me as I wanted to ensure that the policies being analysed are relevant to the present circumstances in Norway. Furthermore, the type of policies I chose for examination was to ensure that my analyses are practical and that the sources used are trustworthy, with specific emphasis on formal and official documents. Lastly, I chose documents written in English to ensure that I can accurately interpret and analyse documents.

3.6 Data Collection Methods.

Clark et al. (2016, p. 10) highlight that data collection is the focal point and crucial step in any research endeavour. He underscores the significance of the collected data as a primary criterion for addressing the research inquiries. Various data collection techniques are employed in research projects, with the choice depending on whether the research method is quantitative or qualitative (Bryman 2016; Blaikie, 2000). In this thesis, my primary goal was to gather information on social integration of refugees for inclusive and sustainable development.

I aimed to understand the integration programmes and policies for refugees in Norway, the challenges and opportunities of socially integrating refugees as well as refugees experiences of social integration. After careful consideration, I determined that conducting interviews and document analysis would be the most appropriate method for this study. According to Clark et al. (2021), there are three distinct interview styles: the structured interview, commonly used in survey and quantitative research, the unstructured interview, which is more conversational and less rigidly structured, and the semi-structured interview, which combines elements of both styles. Given that this study is purely qualitative and unstructured and semi-structured interviews are common approaches in qualitative research (Creswell, 2014; Bryman, 2016), I selected the semi-structured interview as the primary method for collecting data as well as relying on document analysis.

As previously stated, the semi-structured interview combines elements of both structured and unstructured interview styles (O'reilly, 2012). The semi-structured interview is the predominant approach utilised in qualitative research, as emphasised by Braun and Clarke (2013, p. 78).

Initially, it enables the researcher to thoroughly examine the concepts with the participants, and subsequently acquire definitive responses based on specific criteria (O'reilly, 2012, p. 120).

According to Braun and Clarke (2013, p. 78), the researcher has a set of questions but also allows informants to bring up unanticipated issues. Even though I aimed at exclusively collecting my empirical data within the confines of the municipality of Kristiansand, which serves as the sole focus of my research, I had to rely on the Red Cross in Oslo as I did not get enough people from the Red Cross in Kristiansand. I conducted my research with a total of 17 respondents. Out of these respondents, nine were refugees, three from the Kristiansand Red Cross, three from the Red Cross in Oslo, one from the Kristiansand municipality and the last respondent from Norway Multicultural Centre.

Again, I relied on document analysis. I conducted an interpretive analysis of integration policies in Norway. Documents, according to Clark et al. (2021), are windows onto social and organisational realities and it is tempting to assume that documents reveal something about an underlying social reality. This underlines the significance of conducting this study, which aims to explore whether or not the goals of this document are consistent with reality. It's also crucial to point out that the interpretive analysis I chose is influenced by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). An established field of study called CDA uses text analysis to study social phenomena (Wodak and Meyer, 2009). It is distinguished by the common interests in de-mystifying ideologies and power through the systematic and retroductable investigation of semiotic data (written, spoken, or visual) and it is combined with various other methodologies, according to the author of the article. Like other critical theories, CDA seeks to empower people to free themselves from oppression and power through critical knowledge and self-reflection. Although I won't conduct a detailed, systematic, or linguistic CDA for this study, I agree with its goals and find it to be an inspiration for my own. I perform an interpretive analysis of the policy documents' content.

3.7 Description of informants.

To ensure anonymity fictive names were used to represent all the 17 interviewees as depicted in Table 1 and 2 below. These names are used throughout the data presentation and analysis without revealing informants' identity in Chapter Five. The following fictive names represent the refugees; Benard (interviewee 1), Noah (interviewee 2), Cant (interviewee 3), Daniel

(interview 4), Allen (interviewee 5), Marli (interviewee 6), Aba (interviewee 7), Bawa (interviewee 8), Karim (interviewee 9). These refugees are from various countries, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Syria. Their ages range from 25 to 40 years old and are males only.

Additionally, there were three respondents from the Red Cross in Kristiansand, three from the Red Cross in Oslo, one respondents from the Kristiansand municipality, and the last interviewee from Norway Multicultural Centre. For the purpose of anonymity, I intend not to associate any of the fictive names of my respondents to any of the institutions recruited for the study. I believe doing so might reveal their identity. The following fictive names represent respondents involved in the integration of refugees. Amanda (interviewee 1), Anita (interviewee 2), Mary (interviewee 3), Iban (interview 4), Han (interviewee 5), Alia (interviewee 6), Rich (interview 7), Kaka (interviewee 8). Out of these eight respondents only two are males, while the remaining six are females.

Table 1: Background information of refugees.

Background information of Refugees	Bernard	Noah	Carl	Daniel	Allen	Marli	Aba	Bawa	Karim
Gender	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male
Age	25	33	38	31	34	40	28	30	40
Marital status	Single	Single	Married	Single	Single	Married	Single	Single	Married
Number of Children	0	0	2	1	0	3	3	4	2
Country of Origin	Syria	Eritrea	DR. Congo	DR. Congo	Syria	Somalia	Eritrea	Ethiopia	Ukraine
Number years in Norway	3	3	4	3	4	3	3	0	2
Level of education	BA degree	BA degree	BA degree	BA degree	High School	Vocational school	High school	Diploma	BA degree

Table 2: Background information of interviewees from the Red Cross, Kristiansand municipality and Norway Multicultural Center.

Background information of informants	Amanda	Anita	Mary	Iban	Han	Alia	Kaka	Rich
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male	Male
Age	30	33	39	34	65	38	57	42
Level of education	Bachelor degree	Master's degree	Bachelor degree	Medical School	Master's degree	Master's degree	Master's degree	PhD
Position	volunteer	volunteer	Staff	volunteer	Staff	Staff	Staff	Staff

3.8 Method for Analysing Data.

The study utilised qualitative data obtained from semi-structured interviews and document analysis, and data analysis was performed using the thematic analysis technique. Thematic analysis is a significant and fundamental method that is well-suited for analysing qualitative data, despite not receiving much recognition (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). The themes derived from the gathered data serve as the fundamental components of this analytical approach. Thematic analysis, as defined by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 79), is a method used to identify, analyse, and report patterns or themes within data. Clark et al. (2021, p. 537) state that themes can be developed based on codes derived from transcripts and field notes. Moreover, a theme can be regarded as an area of interest chosen by the researcher, serving as a framework for comprehending the gathered data. Specifically, themes should possess the ability to encapsulate significant aspects of the data in order to effectively address the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82).

Thematic analysis is a commonly employed method for analysing qualitative data in the field of social sciences. In this study, the thematic analysis was conducted using Braun and Clarke's general method for thematic analysis, as outlined by Clark et al. (2021, pp. 537-538).

1. Acquaintance with data.

I utilised an audio recording device to capture the conducted interviews, and subsequently transcribed a total of 17 interviews that were stored in my personal recording device. At this point, following the suggestion of Clark et al. (2021), I thoroughly reviewed the transcripts multiple times in order to gain an understanding of the interviewees' perspectives. I then made concise notes, emphasising the aspects that seemed most significant and intriguing for addressing the research inquiries.

2. Open or initial coding.

Based on the concept derived from the previous phase and the recorded observations, I assigned specific labels (initial codes) to selected interview excerpts from the transcripts that seemed relevant to the study and research inquiries. Tuckett (2005), as cited in Braun and Clarke's (2006) study, states that these initial codes assist the researcher in categorising data into coherent groups. By the conclusion of these stages, there were numerous codes and interview excerpts pertaining to various research inquiries.

3. Searching for themes.

Upon receiving a series of codes, I endeavoured to construct themes that would encompass the constructed codes from the preceding level. Adhering to the instructions provided by Braun and Clarke (2006), I employed a visual depiction to convert codes into themes.

4. Reviewing themes.

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest conducting a thorough review of the constructed themes to ensure that they comprehensively encompass all the codes and collected data. According to their observation, data that fall into specific categories should be logically connected and the categories should be easily distinguishable from one another. All themes were carefully reviewed.

5. Defining themes.

In this phase, the sub-themes and themes that were identified and reviewed in the previous phases are defined, refined, and given names. At this stage, I conducted a thorough analysis of each theme to determine their fundamental nature and their alignment with all my data. This process aimed to confirm the relationships and connections between the themes and my

research questions (Braun & Clark, 2006). To enhance the quality of my themes, I need to determine if they include any sub-themes and ensure that there is not excessive overlap between them. According to Braun and Clark (2006, p. 92), subthemes can be understood as themes that exist within a larger theme. I concluded this stage by precisely delineating all my topics and assigning them suitable labels encompassing my entire dataset.

6. Presenting themes.

The final phase involved composing the report, which entailed a thorough analysis of the chosen themes. The objective at this stage was to guarantee uniformity both between and among my ultimate chosen themes. According to Bryman (2016), my responsibility was to validate the interconnection of my selected themes and ensure that their implications supported the overall structure. Braun and Clark (2006) asserted that the analysis of data within and across themes should be conducted in a succinct, coherent, logical, non-repetitive, and engaging manner. After this, I therefore chose the relevant themes to focus on.

3.9 Ethical Considerations.

The importance of research ethics should not be underestimated, as a lack of knowledge regarding them can lead to significant ethical dilemmas (Bryman, 2012, p. 130). Clark et al. (2021, p. 113) state that there are multiple ethical principles that must be considered during the process of conducting social research. Consequently, this study was carried out in accordance with those ethical principles. Specifically, I focused on the potential negative consequences (both psychological and physiological) that could be inflicted upon the participants. Diener and Crandall (1979) highlight, as cited in Clark et al.'s (2021, p. 113) book, that the term "harm" encompasses not only physical injury but also damage to participants' development, loss of self-esteem, stress, and the encouragement of respondents to engage in objectionable behaviours. For this study, I conducted interviews with refugees who might have gone through a lot of traumas before finding their feet in Norway, so I had to make sure that I do not force refugees to talk about issues they do not want to talk about. Secondly, other studies have proven that people do not want to be referred to as refugees. For this reason, I had to find a way to introduce my research topic to the participants.

The interviews were carried out with the explicit consent of the participants and with a strong emphasis on safeguarding their privacy, which is considered a crucial ethical principle as stated

by Clark et al. (2021). In addition, the respondents were given the option to terminate the interview at any point during its course. Given the small size of the Kristiansand region where my study took place, I had to exercise great caution in anonymizing the participants. In addition, I carried out this research investigation and presented its results, adhering to the instructions provided by Clark et al. (2021, p. 125) to ensure ethical conduct by avoiding any manipulation of the study participants or potential readers.

Furthermore, the study was conducted in accordance with the protocols established by SIKT and the University of Agder. Specifically, the data collection was carried out with the authorization of SIKT due to the study's need for certain data that is considered personal information of the participants. The signed consent forms of the respondents were securely stored at home to prevent unauthorised access.

In summary, I conducted the research study in accordance with the protocols outlined by SIKT and UIA. In addition, the study took into account the recommendations of Clark et al. (2021) to ensure the integrity of rigorous social research and prevent any ethical concerns. Particularly, I devoted careful consideration to crafting interview guides. As an example, during the interviews, I deliberately chose harmless language and courteous expressions to prevent the respondents from feeling attacked or insulted.

3.10 Transparency.

This study employed a qualitative approach to specifically investigate social integration of refugees for inclusive and sustainable development. In order to make sure that the information I obtained from my informants is exactly what they meant, I double-checked their responses during the interviews by asking them critical questions and follow-up questions. This enabled me to update some outdated information or make corrections. In order to fully understand my informants' perspectives, I also conducted personal interviews with them. If a question is not properly understood by the interviewees, I rephrased it. Finally, I obtained informed consent, ensured confidentiality and anonymity and followed all the ethical guidelines laid down by SIKT and the University of Agder.

3.11 Challenges.

Immigration and integration can be sensitive topics and respondents may be hesitant to share their experiences due to fear of stigma and discrimination. Inaccurate or incomplete data may result if interviewees are not comfortable or willing to disclose their experiences. Again, gaining access to immigrants or refugees and recruiting informants can be challenging due to language barriers and trust issue. Under representation or selection bias may occur if researchers are unable to access diverse range of informants. One major challenge I encountered again was with the institutions. The Norwegian Directorate of Integration did not express the need to be part of the study as they told me they do not have the right to speak for the government. Again, I was not able to recruit enough respondents from the Red Cross in Kristiansand as most people told me they work under the Kristiansand municipality and are not autonomous for which I had to rely on some respondents from the Red Cross in Oslo. After countless calls, emails, and personal visit to the Kristiansand municipality, which was also part of the study, only one official accepted to be part of the study. As my focus was on refugees who could speak, read, and understand English, it was also challenging getting refugees within this category. This notwithstanding, I understand that participation in this study is voluntary, and I am happy to say that I was able to recruit respondents who were willing and happy to be part of my study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DOCUMENT ANALYSES AND DISCUSSIONS ON INTEGRATION POLICIES

4.0 Introduction.

As previously stated in Chapter Three, this study is of a qualitative nature, with primary data being collected through document analyses. The first objective of this study is to examine the integration policies and programmes for refugees for inclusive and sustainable development. This section provides an overview of the Norwegian integration law, the Norwegian introduction programme for refugees, integration initiatives by volunteer organisations, and the various housing models available for refugees in local municipalities. The analysis and discussion is supported by the literature review and the various theoretical frameworks. The integration policies and programmes are then summarized under the integration framework by Heckmann (2005).

4.1. The foundation of refugee interpretation in Norway.

The Norwegian government annually accepts refugees from other countries, contributing to population growth and playing a crucial role in society (SSB, 2022). Key actors in refugee affairs include the United Nations, the Norwegian government's UDI, IMDi, and local municipalities. The foundation of refugee interpretation in Norway is derived from the UN Refugee Convention, and the authorities are required to adhere to this convention. According to Dubus (2018), the hosting country is responsible for providing immediate integration services like housing, language learning, financial support, and employment. The primary legal instruments upholding refugee rights are the 1951 UN Convention and the 1967 Protocol. The Refugee Convention established the legal framework for UNHCR, which acts as the guardian. The convention defines a refugee as an individual who has escaped war, violence, conflict, or persecution and has crossed an international border to seek safety in a different country. The convention has provided global safeguarding for refugees (UNHCR, 1951).

Norway, as a welfare state, adheres to UN conventions, with the primary responsibility for processing refugees' applications lying with the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI). As per UDI, a refugee is an individual who fulfils the criteria for receiving protection in

Norway. In Norway, asylum seekers are typically granted a residence permit if they face persecution based on their ethnicity, religion, political beliefs, skin colour, or nationality. Furthermore, they belong to a specific social category or are at risk of facing the death penalty, torture, or cruel and degrading treatment while on their way home. Asylum seekers are recognised as distinct social categories and are eligible for safeguarding if they possess a legitimate apprehension of mistreatment based on their affiliation with a specific social category (UDI, 2022).

An individual who has requested protection is referred to as an asylum seeker, and their document is pending a final decision. It is good to keep in mind that all refugees can be referred as asylum seekers but not all asylum seekers can be referred as refugees. For the purpose of this thesis readers should keep in mind that asylum seekers used here refers to refugees which is at the center of discussion. An individual is classified as an asylum seeker in Norway from the moment they report to the police until the UDI reviews and makes a decision on their application. As soon as they have received a final answer to their applications, they are no longer called asylum seekers. Individuals who receive a residence permit in Norway as a refugee or on humanitarian grounds are allowed to stay, while those whose applications are denied must leave the country (UDI, 2022).

The common inquiries revolve around the process and timeline of applying for protection and UDI's decision-making duration for applicants in Norway. Regrettably, there is no definitive answer to the questions. The duration of the waiting period for an applicant depends on their citizenship. UDI has distinct application procedures for refugees based on their country of origin. Asylum seekers must endure a lengthy waiting period and have the option to return to their home country at any point. Some of these cases can last for multiple years, during which asylum seekers are prohibited from working until they obtain a residence permit in Norway. Exceptions include situations such as the recent war crisis in Ukraine or when an asylum seeker arrives with a passport. Asylum seekers with a passport facilitate the UDI's ability to create an identity profile that expedites the process. Once you have submitted your application for protection, you will be allocated a spot at an asylum reception centre and scheduled for an interview with the UDI. The UDI evaluates whether an asylum seeker is eligible for protection (asylum) in Norway. Qualifying for a residence permit based on humanitarian reasons or a strong tie to Norway is known as a residence permit on humanitarian grounds. If they have a

passport, it will likely be confiscated by the police during the interview to process the travel document and residence permit card. Refugees are issued a travel document specifying that it is valid for all countries except their country of origin (UDI, 2022).

Legal or political issues is one of the components of the three-way process concept of integration as proposed by Garcés-Masareñas and Penninx, (2016). The legal-political dimension concerns residency rights and political statuses. The main question is about the extent to which refugees are viewed as fully integrated members of the political community. A refugee's level of integration can be classified into two clear extremes. An example is an irregular immigrant who is not recognised as a member of the host society in a legal-political context, despite potential integration in other areas. The other aspect concerns the immigrant or refugee's status, particularly whether they have obtained or currently possess citizenship in the host country (Penninx, 2005). The diversity between European states has increased in recent years as a result of efforts to regulate international migration and create various statuses and rights within the EU migration system (Hammar, 2004; Entzinger 2000). This means that for refugees to get fully integrated in the Norwegian society and be part of the systems and the processes, they must first go through the legal dimension as stated by Garces-Masareñas and Penninx.

4.1.1 Norwegian Integration Policy.

The integration law, developed by Norway's Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, focuses on Education, Training, and Work. The primary focus of the Norwegian integration law is to ensure that refugees are integrated into Norwegian society promptly and achieve financial self-sufficiency. Integration does not have a single definition, but it is generally seen as crucial to speak the language of the host country and to find employment, according to Dubus (2018). Refugees must acquire proficient Norwegian language skills, understanding of Norwegian culture, formal qualifications, and sustain a continuous link to the workforce as mandated by this law. According to the immigration law, a refugee is defined as someone seeking protection, while an immigrant is someone with a residence permit in Norway. The local and county municipality is tasked with implementing an introduction programme to help refugees learn the Norwegian language and the Norwegian society (IMDi, 2022).

They cover local culture and offer essential information to refugees on how Norway's primary governmental system operates. The county municipality is responsible for overseeing

integration efforts on a larger scale, such as developing qualification plans, advising on the allocation of refugees to local municipalities in the area, and offering career guidance and social studies. Asylum seekers over 18 years old must participate in training to learn the Norwegian language and complete at least 50 hours of social studies in the classroom. Refugees are enrolled in the Norwegian introduction programme by the local municipality soon after they settle in the area. The Ministry of Education supplies the instructional material (IMDi, 2022).

At a national level, individual plan preparation and competence mapping are carried out by local municipalities. Integration efforts support refugee settlement by providing training skills, career/education guidance, and personalised introduction programmes in the municipality. Refugees aged 18 to 55 with a residence permit and living in a municipality are required to participate in the introduction programme. This provision excludes Nordic citizens and foreigners protected by the European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement. An introduction programme is a formal agreement between the municipality and the refugee. The municipality provides opportunities for refugees within three months of their settlement (IMDi, 2022).

The local municipality determines the duration of the introduction programme according to integration law, and the programme concludes once the final goal or specified duration is achieved. The introduction programme must include training in the Norwegian language, life skills course, and work- or education-oriented aspects. The municipality provides an introductory programme, Norwegian language training, and social studies as part of the integration contract. Reasons to halt the introductory programme may include prolonged absence, disruptive behaviour affecting participants' progress, or serious and enduring illness. Refugees may be traumatised and thus limited in their capacity to meet societal expectations. They are referred to the mental health support system. Adult learning centres for refugees providing language classes have specialised programmes tailored for traumatised refugees. IMDi offers a grant to municipalities to cover additional services they offer. The law has considered various aspects to ensure that entitlement to benefits is granted or reduced for specific reasons. The participant can request permission from the municipality to be excused from the Norwegian language and social studies training (IMDi, 2022).

This integration policy clearly aligns with some of the goals of the SDGs which are at the centre of this study such as access to quality education (SDG4), good health and well-being (SDG3),

decent work and economic growth (SDG8), reducing poverty (SDG1) and reducing inequalities.

This section of the integration policy falls under the last two dimensions of the three-way process concept of integration by Garcés-Mascareñas and Pennix (2016) which are economic and cultural. Under the economic dimension Norway as a country gives refugees some form of economic independence by providing them life skill courses, or education-oriented aspect. This platform allows for the assessment of refugees and immigrants' participation and engagement in essential community areas. Under the cultural dimension, Norway as a country with diverse population prioritise the equal importance of various ethnicities, cultures, and worldviews according to the policy. This enables refugees to hold on to their culture as well as learn the Norwegian way of life. Garcés-Mascareñas and Pennix are of the view that the three dimensions are not completely autonomous from each other. The legal-political dimension has the potential to influence both the socio-economic and cultural-religious dimensions which this study agrees with. While the legal dimension does have an impact on the last two dimensions, it is not possible to achieve a significant integration within these dimensions without without strong connections between refugees and their local communities.

The social capital theory highlights the significance of social networks and relationships in attaining both personal and group objectives. It implies that the relationships and affiliations individuals have within their communities or social networks can offer them with resources, assistance, and prospects. Refugees frequently depend on social networks to obtain resources, such as housing information, employment prospects, and educational opportunities. Robust social capital acts as a catalyst for refugees to effectively assimilate into the cultural and economic fabric of their new society. Having a strong social network in the communities where refugees settle can make it easier for them to access resources and integrate successfully (Durkheim, 2010).

Bempong et al. (2019) posit that the mental well-being of refugees is adversely affected by various factors, including exposure to violence, unaccompanied migration between countries, and internalising difficulties. Refugees often encounter a range of distressing circumstances, such as torture, violence, killing, rape, atrocities, starvation, and incarceration, which pose significant challenges to their successful integration into new communities (Bemak & Chung, 2017). The decline in mental well-being among refugees has a discernible influence on their

ability to effectively navigate social situations and establish meaningful connections with individuals within their host community.

4.1.2 Provision of Housing and Settlement of Refugees in a Local Municipality.

Protection (asylum) refers to receiving a residence permit as a refugee in Norway (UDI, 2022). IMDi introduces asylum-granted refugees to local municipalities in Norway based on their ability to accommodate a refugee family and offer housing. Refugees who are officially recognised and approved in Norway are eligible to receive housing. NAV allocates housing payments for the initial three months for all refugees, facilitated through social assistance (NAV Social Assistance, 2022). IMDi offers a grant to municipalities to establish integration programmes focusing on teaching fundamental Norwegian language skills, social studies, and work-related initiatives. The aim is to help individuals make informed decisions regarding qualifications, education, and employment, and tailor the introduction programme to meet their specific requirements. This will help make the introduction programme more focused and enhance a sustained connection to the individual's professional life (Regjeringen, 2016; IMDi, 2022).

The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) collaborates with the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi), a specific municipality, and the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV). Two primary activities are carried out when settling a refugee in the municipality, one prior to arrival and the other after arrival. Upon receiving an email notification of a new refugee family's arrival, the refugee settlement office initiates preparations and contacts relevant entities within the municipality. The refugee settlement office creates a checklist which includes tasks such as coordinating with the housing unit to secure a rental property, purchasing equipment and furniture, scheduling appointments with the municipalities, kindergarten, school, hospital, NAV, and other pertinent agencies. Upon the arrival of a refugee family, settlement coordinators assist them with pre-arranged appointments and orientation tours of the city for shopping clothes and obtaining bus cards (IMDi, 2022)..

Refugee housing allocation depends on the refugee's length of stay in the municipality. The municipality urges refugees to take initiative and be self-reliant during the introduction programme. Long-term refugees often establish networks that enable them to meet their basic

needs. There are three housing models offered to refugees. One of the three models is communal housing, which consists of apartments owned by the municipality and rented out to newly arrived refugees. NAV pays the rent for communal housing before refugees are enrolled in the introduction programme. 2. Sublets refer to a housing complex owned by someone who authorises the municipality to rent it out on their behalf. 3. Private housing involves refugees renting their own accommodations and negotiating directly with house owners in the open market. Refugee housing is intended to be located in affluent neighbourhoods near amenities. Refugees have the right to own a house under specific conditions, including a low-interest start loan and a long-term repayment period. A housing social policy for refugees enables refugees to become homeowners (IMDi, 2022).

The provision of housing for refugees falls under Markers and means of Ager and Strang (2008) proposed framework for successful integration. Ager and Strand argue that sufficient and consistent housing acts as an indicator of integration. Having access to secure and reasonably priced housing is crucial for individuals and families to establish a stable presence in a new community. It has the ability to indicate stability and dedication to integration, offering a feeling of inclusion and safety. Housing also functions as a mechanism for integration by enabling access to other indicators. Living in a neighbourhood with high-quality schools can significantly improve educational opportunities for children. Likewise, having convenient access to public transport from where one lives can help increase job prospects and foster social relationships. Housing for refugees is one of the indicators of the sustainable development goals (Regjeringen 2016; IMDi, 2022).

4.1.3 The Efforts of the Refugee Settlement Office.

The refugee settlement team oversees all facets of refugees' arrival in the local municipalities. Every three years, the City council determines the cap on the number of refugees allowed to be resettled in the municipality for that period. Every year, the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) sends a formal request to the local municipality to accommodate a specific quota of refugees. The refugee settlement office, in collaboration with the City Manager's office and following the City Council's directive, determines the annual quota for refugee settlement in the municipality. Typically, the settlement office arranges housing and provides furnishings for refugees. They also purchase food items in advance for those arriving directly from abroad, enough to last for the initial days. Upon arrival, refugee settlement coordinators escort the

refugees to their new homes and teach them how to live in Norway. The initial week emphasises practical tasks such as using appliances, buying clothes and food, and undergoing mandatory health checks. Over the next few months, settlement coordinators assist them in adapting to life in Norway law (Regjeringen 2016; IMDi, 2022).

This support encompasses various services such as finalising their immigration status, enrolling in school or creche, opening a bank account, navigating the tax system, familiarising themselves with municipal services, applying for social benefits, receiving dental and eye care, undergoing a physical examination, receiving necessary vaccinations, learning about local shopping options, becoming proficient in using technology, engaging in leisure activities like sports, particularly for children law (Regjeringen 2016; IMDi, 2022).

The settlement team intends to complete their tasks within three months of arrival, but they are rarely able to do so due to bureaucratic and individual factors, such as health issues. Their mandate continues until they finish all their tasks, or other services such as school and NAV assume responsibility. They continue to oversee all housing matters until the refugees achieve self-sufficiency. These refugee initiatives can range from two months to six years in duration. Refugees aged 18 to 55 must begin an introduction programme in their settled municipality within three months of arrival, as mandated by the integration law (Regjeringen 2016; IMDi, 2022).

The settlement team not only assists new refugees but also oversees all grants from the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) and organises services for refugees with special needs or acute health problems. The settlement team also organises services for adults over 55 years old, as they are not covered by the integration law. Minors aged 16 and 17 upon arrival are considered unique cases. Education for individuals aged 16 and 17 is not under municipal jurisdiction, and as they are below 18 years old, they are exempt from the integration law. These children do not fall under the jurisdiction of a particular municipal department, but as refugees, they have distinct needs that the state authorities are unable to address. Hence, the settlement team intervenes to provide assistance to children and young adults (Regjeringen 2016; IMDi, 2022).

The refugee settlement team is in charge of obtaining adult dental services and foreign language translation services, as well as overseeing the contracts for these services throughout the

contract period. The refugee settlement team engages in different forums focusing on expertise in minority language communication and cultural understanding (IMDi, 2022)..

4.1.4 Competence Mapping and Career Guidance.

Prior to commencing the introduction programme for a refugee, competence mapping and career guidance are conducted to guarantee a personalised and focused programme for the individual. Strategizing skill development with expert guidance is an initial step taken prior to commencing the orientation programme. Career guidance considers an individual's age, motivation, and aspirations, while also examining the opportunities and constraints in the local labour market. Career guidance can assist municipalities in effectively coordinating the introduction programme with each individual participant. Hence, career guidance should be finished within three months of settlement and before the municipality determines refugees' participation in the introduction programme (Regjeringen, 2016; Lillevik & Tyldum, 2018; IMDi, 2022).

Competence mapping and career guidance is the initial official meeting between the municipality and each adult refugee in the family, where the information exchanged by both parties is vital. The programme advisor assigned by the municipality must ensure that the refugee comprehends the significance of the meeting. The individual integration plan serves as the initial step for participants who have obtained their first residence permit. It forms the foundation for establishing final goals for the introductory programme and evaluating the resources the participant can utilise throughout the programme duration. If competence mapping for a refugee is not conducted before they settle in a municipality, the municipality should finalise the procedure for the eligible target group in the introduction programme. Refugees have obligations and responsibilities in relation to completing the components of the introduction programme. Mapping must be completed prior to the program's commencement, and factors like proficiency in Norwegian, educational background, and work experience should be addressed when creating the individual plan. The competence survey's transparency is guaranteed by a digital tool named Kompass, utilised in all Norwegian municipalities. This tool allows local municipalities to access information to determine if a refugee is included in IMDi's mapping system. Refugee competence mapping occurs within two weeks of receiving the residence permit. Competence mapping is conducted for refugees residing in the reception centre who have received a residence permit and are considered the target group for the introduction programme (Regjeringen, 2016; Lillevik & Tyldum, 2018, IMDi, 2022).

4.1.5 Norwegian Introduction Programme.

What is the purpose of the introduction programme? The Norwegian Introduction Programme, as defined by the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi), is a training programme designed to ready refugees for engagement in Norwegian society and workforce. I summarise the main content of each mandatory section of the Norwegian introduction programme in subtitles. All refugees aged 18 to 55 arriving in Norway are required to partake in the introduction programme, as well as any family members who arrive in the country subsequently. Participants will acquire proficiency in the Norwegian language, undergo an introductory programme, and gain insights into Norwegian working life, education, and society. The government aims for participants to secure employment or pursue further education upon completing the introduction programme. The goal is to enhance the chances for recently arrived refugees to engage in the workforce and society and achieve financial autonomy. The agreement is a full-time contract between the municipality and adult refugees (Regjeringen, 2016; Lillevik & Tyldum, 2018; IMDi, 2022).

Participants are required to engage daily for 7.5 hours, learn the language, and take part in introductory activities. The resources in the introduction programme offer essential and valuable information for municipalities and partners regarding planning and executing introduction programme activities. The participants should start the introduction program no later than three months after the refugee has settled in a municipality. Participants are required to complete the introduction programme, as mandated by Norwegian integration law. This law stipulates that refugees must acquire life skills when settling in a new country, and families with children must attend parental guidance sessions. The introduction programme includes instruction in the Norwegian language, social studies, and components focused on work or education (Regjeringen, 2016; Lillevik & Tyldum, 2018; IMDi, 2022).

Training in Norwegian Language and Social Studies: Studying Norwegian and social studies helps refugees develop language skills and comprehend the functioning of the societal system and cultural background in everyday life. Mastering language and social studies is essential to meet the prerequisites for entering the job market and setting educational objectives. One main goal of integration law in Norway is to enhance language skills and address critical cultural and systemic issues in Norwegian society. Enhancing refugees' resilience by improving their social and language skills enables them to participate as active citizens, enter the workforce, pursue

higher education, and utilise digital tools effectively during the challenging times of the Covid-19 pandemic. Public services and information are becoming more accessible on the internet, and it is anticipated that you will be able to locate the necessary information through this channel (IMDi, 2022).

The introduction programme is a full-time contract, as stated before. Networking and engaging in various activities like language cafes, volunteer work, and capacity-building courses organised by volunteer organisations and NGOs are crucial components of the introduction programme. The refugees should use their time efficiently to accelerate the integration process through extra endeavours. The requirement to learn Norwegian and social studies is determined by the specific type of residence permit, time of arrival, and age. Quarterly, Norwegian language and social studies assessments are routinely administered at adult learning centres for refugees to fulfil a requirement for applying for a permanent residence permit or citizenship (Regjeringen 2016; Lillevik, & Tyldum, 2018; IMDi, 2022).

Life skills in a new country: Local municipalities organise introductory courses as part of the Introduction Programme to enhance participants' skills through high-quality training and guidance on a range of subjects. Life skills study typically occurs weekly, allowing participants to attend language classes offered on weekdays. The course coordinator organises introductory sessions in collaboration with various municipal entities and invites professionals to deliver lectures on different subjects. This course primarily consists of group dialogues but may also involve individual guidance when needed to assist participants in recognising and utilising their skills and resources. The discussion topics cover a wide range of subjects, focusing on life in Norway, refugees, the job market, diversity, and competence building to inspire individuals. The main goal of the introductory sessions is to enhance refugees' motivation, educate them about the new culture and its operational systems, empower them through awareness, and set individual goals by recognising their talents to facilitate wise decision-making. Additionally, offer information on building trust in public institutions and systems, assisting individuals in adapting to a new country, engaging as active members of the community, and serving as a support for their family (Regjeringen, 2016; Lillevik & Tyldum, 2018; IMDi, 2022).

Intro course coordinators invite professionals from various organisations such as volunteer organisations, tax offices, child protection offices, NAV, refugee settlement offices, and career

counsellors. Skilled interpreters are employed to ensure accurate communication, and diverse refugee groups with varying educational backgrounds participate in the sessions collectively. Course coordinators should possess pertinent work and educational backgrounds and conduct the programme with career guidance proficiency or other relevant expertise (Regjeringen, 2016; IMDi, 2022).

It is important to maintain good mental and physical health to comprehend the migration process and grasp the challenges and opportunities of a healthy lifestyle in order to prevent conditions like depression. Refugees from diverse backgrounds participating can create a stimulating debate environment, offering unique stories and enhancing sessions to explore how government entities provide services. Refugees can enhance their awareness by immersing themselves in Norwegian society, adopting its culture, rules, and laws, while also preserving their own identity and cultural values, particularly passing them down to their children.

This is primarily intended for self-reflection and achieving specific outcomes by answering the following questions:

What is my origin?

What is the situation I am about to enter?

What are my aspirations for the future?

What is required to achieve a fulfilling life in a foreign country?

Establishing a network in the local community through participation and volunteer work, understanding system functions, acquiring skills in various values, and applying them in a new society is a beneficial way to work towards specific refugee goals. The introduction programme is designed to provide refugees with the necessary knowledge to make autonomous decisions while aligning them with the standards of Norwegian society. The right to live a free and independent life is a clearly established legitimate value, and laws are based on the rights of individuals, irrespective of their gender, age, sexuality, gender expression, ethnicity, and religion. Gender equality and equality are fundamental values (IMDi, 2022).

Norway's gender equality action plan asserts that the country's human resources contribute to its wealth. Gender equality is economically beneficial, and by participating in the workforce, we ensure the sustainability of the welfare state in the future. Hence, we are led to believe that it is gender equality, not oil, that contributes to Norway's wealth. Equality entails the utilisation

of all resources without regard to gender, functional ability, ethnicity, age, or sexual orientation (Action Plan, 2014, p.10). Norway is undergoing a transition regarding career competence, work knowledge, and education. Individuals in the introductory programme are advised to begin planning their professional and career life in Norway early on. They establish the groundwork for this process during the introduction programme, and depending on their skills, they must determine the path to follow in order to successfully integrate into the Norwegian labour market and achieve self-sufficiency (IMDi, 2022).

Career competency mapping involves individuals navigating limitations and opportunities in education and work to make choices and establish lasting connections. Refugees must develop a solid strategy, identify their skills, passions, and principles, and leverage their knowledge. Learning in a new society as an adult can be challenging. Various unexpected events happen; some decisions stem from rational thought, while others arise from chance occurrences. Learning through active engagement is essential, requiring a proactive approach rather than waiting passively for events to unfold. Attaining the desired objective is difficult yet achievable. The impact of networking on decision-making is closely tied to an individual's initiatives. While one may apply for numerous job openings, ultimately, having connections can significantly increase the chances of securing a position. Reasonable adjustments are required when seeking employment or education in Norway. Comprehending the Norwegian education system and labour market features is crucial for navigating the way to employment or further education (Regjeringen, 2016; Lillevik & Tyldum, 2018; IMDi, 2022).

Parental guidance: This part of the introductory programme focuses on assisting parents in raising their children, understanding parental duties, and making the most of the resources at hand. Refugees' parents must facilitate their children's integration into the new country due to the vastly different environment. The introduction programme educates refugee parents on Norway's legal rights and regulations. Course coordinators invite professionals from the child protection office to conduct detailed presentations and debates with participants. Various relevant topics and sessions are arranged through the assigned refugee point of contact in the local municipalities. Competence mapping and plan preparation for refugees involve identifying listed needs, which are then discussed in most introductory sessions to address gaps. Refugees in the introduction programme receive parental guidance through group sessions and individual meetings. An individual guide is available for specific situations involving any of

the participants simultaneously. The primary focus of parental guidance is to protect children from violence and neglect, while also addressing topics like gender equality, diversity, and cultural sensitivity (Regjeringen, 2016; IMDi, 2022).

4.1.6 Refugee Integration Initiatives by Volunteer Organisations.

Volunteer organisations are crucial in aiding refugees with various services and activities, significantly contributing to their integration. These organisations provide valuable support to refugees in various areas including language improvement, social network building, reducing isolation and fears, increasing cultural knowledge about host nations, job search assistance, resume writing help, and more. Research indicates that refugees who engage with volunteer organisations demonstrate improved language skills, expanded social networks, increased friendships, reduced reliance on government assistance, and a more positive outlook on the future compared to other refugees. Refugees and their unions have shown great appreciation for the various activities carried out by human service organisations (Behnia, 2007). Volunteer organisations in Norway are seen as implementation partners of the local government and have played a significant role in assisting refugees with their integration into Norwegian society. Frivillighet Norge is the organisation that has brought together various volunteering efforts in Norway.

Founded in 2005, the organisation consists of over 350 member organisations and serves as a collaborative platform for volunteer organisations in Norway. Volunteer organisations like Red Cross, Caritas Trondheim, Christian Intercultural Work (KIA), and Self-help for immigrants and refugees (SEIF) are actively engaged in different activities in Trøndelag county. They are acknowledged as partners that implement and support the local government. The organisations support refugees by offering integration programmes that focus on language skills, capacity-building courses, job market training, social knowledge about Norway, legal aid, and psychological advice (Frivillighet Norge, 2022).

4.1.7 Summary of the Norwegian integration policies.

The integration policies and programmes are summarized under the structural, cultural, interactional, and identification aspects of the social integration framework proposed by Heckmann (2008).

Structural Dimension: Norwegian integration policies tackle the structural obstacles that could impede refugees ability to obtain resources and opportunities. This encompasses strategies to guarantee equitable access to education, healthcare, housing, and employment which are connected to SDG4, SDG5, SDG11 and SDG8 respectively. Norway has implemented policies to facilitate language acquisition and offer assistance for job training and skills enhancement for refugees, as an example. These endeavours seek to tackle structural disparities and foster the integration of different social and economic groups.

Cultural Dimension. The cultural dimension of Norwegian integration policies prioritises cultural integration, highlighting the significance of mutual respect, comprehension, and tolerance within diverse communities. Cultural integration initiatives encompass various measures such as intercultural dialogue promotion, cultural festival celebrations to embrace diversity, and provision of assistance for language and cultural orientation courses. These programmes strive to diminish social tensions and encourage social cohesion by cultivating a sense of belonging and shared identity.

Interactional Dimension: The interactional dimension refers to the process of individuals forming social interactions and networks within society. Norwegian integration policies foster the active involvement and engagement of refugees and the native population in social activities and interactions. This may entail endeavours such as community engagement programmes, mentoring initiatives, and volunteering prospects. These programmes encourage social integration and mutual understanding by facilitating meaningful social connections and fostering cross-cultural friendships.

Identification Dimension: The identification dimension refers to the process of individuals developing a strong sense of belonging and attachment to the society they are a part of. The objective of Norwegian integration policies is to foster a sense of belonging and collective citizenship among immigrants. This may entail implementing strategies to streamline the process of becoming a citizen and acquiring naturalisation, as well as implementing initiatives to address and prevent discrimination and foster a sense of inclusive national identity. These policies aim to enhance social cohesion and facilitate long-term integration outcomes by promoting a sense of belonging and acceptance.

Overall, Norwegian integration policies and programmes take a comprehensive approach that covers various aspects of social integration, including structural, cultural, interactional, and identification dimensions. These policies aim to facilitate the successful integration of refugees into Norwegian society by addressing obstacles to access, promoting cultural comprehension, facilitating social interaction, and fostering a sense of belonging. This notwithstanding there are challenges that need to be addressed as expressed by refugees, some officials from the Red Cross and the Kristiansand municipality as we will see in the chapter that follows.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS OF QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

5.0 Introduction.

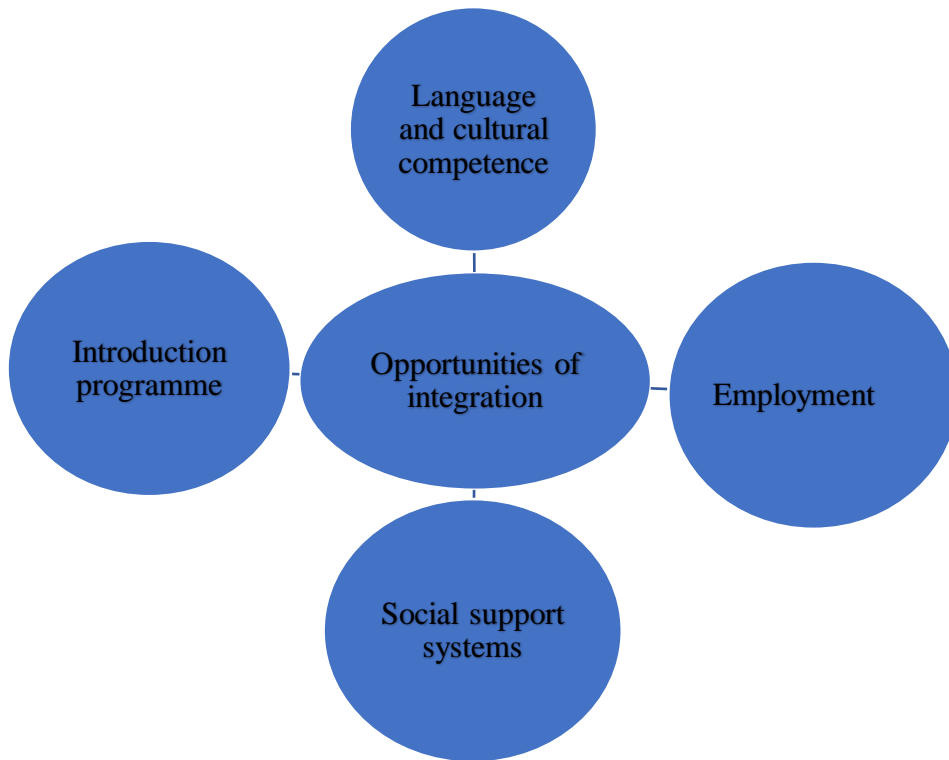
This chapter entails findings from the qualitative interviews with actors working with integration of refugees, as well as with refugees themselves. It first examines how people involved in the integration work of refugees understand the challenges and opportunities in the way they work to ensure inclusive and sustainable development. Secondly, it explores how refugees in Kristiansand experience social integration. Seventeen informants were interviewed with three from the Red Cross in Kristiansand, three from the Red Cross in Oslo, one from the Kristiansand municipality, another person from Norway Multicultural Centre, and nine refugees as depicted in Table 1 and 2 of Chapter Three of this study. For the purpose of anonymity, I will not associate any of my respondents with any of the institutions I recruited for this study. As already stated in the methodology, I believe doing so will reveal the identity of my respondents. This chapter therefore entails the empirical findings and discussions based on the interviews and the literature review outlined in Chapter Two of this study.

5.1 Examining how actors working with integration of refugees understand the challenges and opportunities in the way they work to ensure inclusive and sustainable development.

The thematic analysis is divided into two, that is under challenges and opportunities of integrating refugees to ensure inclusive and sustainable development. The themes under the opportunities of integration are (1) language and cultural competence, (2) employment, (3) introduction programme, and (4) social support systems. Four major themes again emerged under the challenges of integration. These themes are (1) cultural and language barriers, (2) unemployment, (3) challenging social support systems and (4) weak social connections (Field data, 2024). In this part of the study, I will use interviews from the Red Cross, the Kristiansand municipality and Norway Multicultural Center for the discussion. The reason for this is because the motive is to understand professional knowledge on social integration issues, and how they work to include these ideas. To protect interviewees identity, readers should keep in mind that fictive names are used. These fictive names are listed in Table 2 of Chapter Three and used

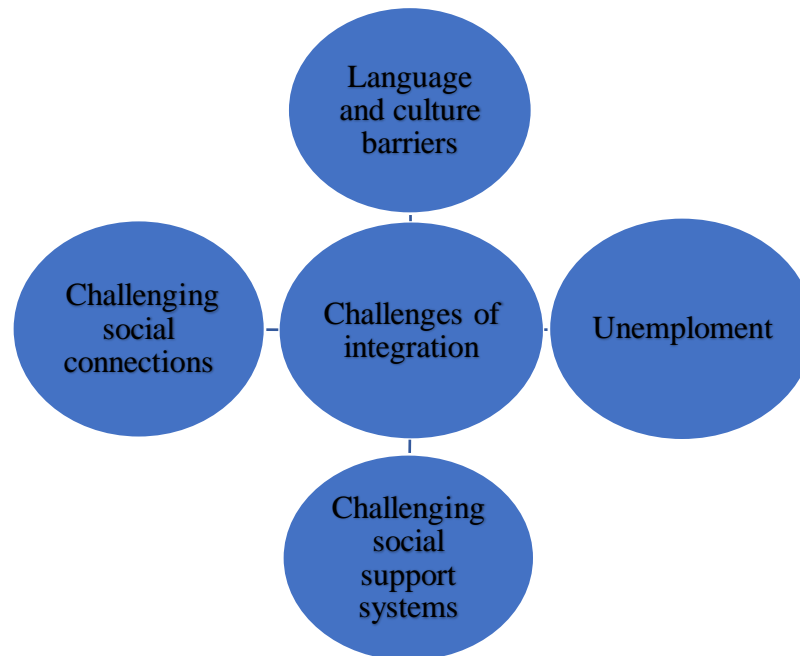
throughout the discussion. I also draw upon literature, and the various theoretical frameworks in Chapter Two of this study.

Figure 5: Themes under opportunities of integrating refugees for inclusive and sustainable development.



Field data (2024)

Figure 6: Themes under challenges of integrating refugees for inclusive and sustainable development.



Field data (2024).

Themes under the *opportunities* and *challenges* of integrating refugees for inclusive and sustainable development are analysed and partly discussed together in this section. The rationale for doing this is that the study identified a correlation between some of the themes in the opportunities and the challenges of integration as depicted in Figure 5 and 6 above. For this reason, the following themes are analysed, and discussed together, language and cultural competence vs. language and cultural barriers, employment vs. unemployment, social support systems vs. challenging social support systems. The themes that are not correlated such as the introduction programme and challenging social connections are discussed distinctly.

5.1.1 Language and culture competence vs language and cultural barriers.

Most interviewees from the Red Cross and the Kristiansand municipality stated that language and cultural competence is one of the opportunities of integration, and it therefore becomes a challenge when refugees lack language and cultural knowledge of the receiving society. The informants are of the view that the ability of refugees to speak and master the culture of their new host society makes it easier for them to get integrated. Some of the interviewees further

added that the mastery of the Norwegian language, and the culture is crucial for obtaining vital services and resources, including healthcare, social welfare benefits, housing assistance, and legal aid (Field data, 2024).

Amanda who used to work as a volunteer asserts that language and cultural barriers pose substantial challenges to social integration. Language barriers hinder refugees participation in the labour market, and hinder their engagement in community activities. She added that cultural barriers can result in misinterpretations, marginalisation, and feelings of solitude. Refugees in Kristiansand face additional difficulties due to the necessity of adjusting to Norwegian societal norms and customs, which can differ significantly from those in their countries of origin (Field data, 2024).

According to Kaka, an actor working with integration, language and cultural competence enable refugees to secure jobs and gives them some kind of trust at the workplace. He added that if you look into the Norwegian health system for example, the big part of being a nurse or a doctor is being able to communicate and connect with patients and understand how they feel. It therefore becomes a security risk for health institutions to employ people who cannot speak and understand the Norwegian language and the culture (Field data, 2024).

Iban, a volunteer on the field of integration talked about the importance of language skills,

I think language is the key factor to integration. For an inclusive society, it means you should be well integrated into the system and do what the citizens do or have the same opportunities as Norwegians without any discrimination or biases. For all these to take place you need the language and the culture to understand the Norwegian society. If you learn the language and the culture you get more job opportunities, and even integration itself is not possible without knowing the Norwegian language, and the culture. When you learn the language and the culture you are able to integrate easier, you have access to different job opportunities, and you are able to become upstanding citizen in the society.

(Field data, 2024).

Kaka is of the view that companies or institutions in Norway are more comfortable employing people who understand the Norwegian culture. He cited that employing someone from Ghana will not be the same as employing someone from Norway. Kaka further told a story of how

institutions in Kristiansand used to barely employ people from the North of Norway in the 1970s and the 1980s because of cultural differences. This indicates that in Kristiansand institutions prefer to employ people they know and trust. Most of the interviewees in this study contend that language and cultural barriers becomes a major challenge to integration (Field data, 2024)

Han claims that some refugees are not able to adapt to new cultures making it difficult for integration, and their ability to secure jobs. She stated that refugees from Islamic countries or the Middle East do not see the need to learn or adjust to new cultures as compared to refugees from Sri Lanka or Vietnam. This difference was something Kaka also emphasised.

Mary adds that the Red Cross understands the role of language and cultural competence in the integration of refugees. Because of this, measures have been put in place to help refugees practice Norwegian in different ways.

In Kristiansand we have the International Women's Group where refugee women from different backgrounds meet and have different activities. They learn important things that are beneficial to the Norwegian society. Sometimes there are more than 50 women from more than 14 nationalities trying to build networks and learn from each other. They engage in cultural activities like singing and dancing that bring them joy, and happiness as they practice the Norwegian language. We also have a language café. Refugees go to the language café, sit around a table and practice Norwegian with each other. We are also about to start international men's group that will focus on physical or outdoor activities for men. We want to show that the Norwegian practice is not only in the classroom or around the table all the time. We must find interesting ways where people can meet, have fun and practice Norwegian.

(Field data, 2024)

As argued by Heckmann (2008), participation and understanding of a society's fundamental institutions is impossible without cultural and language competence. For this reason, cultural integration is a key component of Heckmann's social integration framework as depicted in Figure 2 of chapter two in this study. Heckmann asserts that only after gaining the fundamental knowledge and skills of the new culture and society can refugees assert their rights, hold positions, and be granted status in it. Cultural integration pertains to the various stages and

conditions of a person's shift in cognition, behaviour, and attitude that precede socialisation and encourages involvement and integration (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2006).

Again, language and cultural competence falls under the facilitators of Ager and Strang (2008) proposed conceptual framework of integration which is relevant to the findings of this study. Ager and Strang contend that language proficiency is a crucial aspect of "cultural competence" when it comes to successfully reintegrating into a new society. In addition, it is worth noting that power is intricately linked to language and cultural knowledge, as highlighted by Clegg (1989). Refugees lacking proficiency in the predominant language encounter obstacles in accessing enhanced economic, and social prospects, as well as experiencing limitations in their ability to engage with the power dynamics within the host society (Dustmann & Fabbri, 2003; Shields & Price, 2002).

The issue of effective communication and cultural competence between host and refugee communities is also widely acknowledged by Ager and Strang (2008) and Clegg (1989). Furthermore, Vaara, Tienari, Piekkari, and Sääntti (2005) argue that the ability of refugees to fluently speak the language and understand the culture of their host countries enables them to establish more robust social connections, as it grants them greater opportunities to engage in both formal and informal modes of communication. These authors add that individuals who possess a restricted level of competence in the native language of their host countries often encounter exclusion from participation in decision-making procedures. Also, access to information networks is emphasised as important (Marschan-Piekkari, Welch, & Welch, 1999). The findings in my thesis support the argument that in order to socially integrate, refugees need to master the language and the culture of the host country.

5.1.2 Employment vs. unemployment.

Most of the interviewees in this study contend that employment is a key opportunity of integration for inclusive and sustainable development. In fact, employment is one of the indicators of the SDGs which I sought to understand through this study. According to most of the informants, employment grants refugees economic stability and assets, in return empowering them to engage in society. It therefore becomes a major challenge when refugees are not able to secure employment. Some of the interviewees further added that the ability of refugees to secure employment leads to the feeling of inclusion and commitment to the

community. Kaka asserts that the inability of refugees to secure jobs leads to low income which prevents them from accessing good health services, housing, education and other essential services. He added that the prices of goods and services are high in Norway as compared to most Scandinavian countries and therefore, the inability of refugees to secure jobs will lead to low income. He said for this reason Kristiansand as a municipality has launched a project called “everybody in work” that is not only connected with refugees, but also includes research trying to find out why people are not able to connect with the workforce (Field data, Feb. 2024). Han added,

Having access to employment is key to integration. For this reason, there are government support systems for refugees who wants to set up their own businesses, and a lot of restaurants in town are owned and managed by refugees. Refugees who set up businesses in Norway get monthly financial support from the government till their businesses flourish. There are also two areas where the government supports refugees, and that is in fishing and in agriculture.

(Field data, 2024).

Anita is of the view that employment serves not only as a source of financial sustenance but also as a crucial element of social assimilation.

Obtaining employment is frequently the initial milestone for refugees as they strive to reconstruct their lives in a foreign nation. Employment grants economic autonomy, diminishing dependence on social welfare and empowering refugees to sustain their families. It also presents avenues for establishing professional connections, nurturing social bonds, and alleviating feelings of isolation. Additionally, it enhances self-worth and confidence, enabling refugees to regain a sense of agency over their lives.

(Field data, 2024)

Mary asserts that language is key to employment in Kristiansand. The obstacle of not knowing the language and network make it difficult to get employment. You need network and language competence to enter the job market. Even though Kristiansand is making progress, there is some form of xenophobia where people are afraid of the unknown. According to her that also influences the integration process. Sometimes institutions do not want to take the chance of employing people they do not know (Field data, 2024).

Alia, another actor volunteering for work with integration contends that the ability of refugees to secure employment enables them to work their way to the top. She stated that refugees ability to secure jobs increases their financial status, and when that happens, they can access good health care, housing and quality education. She further added that employment enables refugees to know more people and build connections with the local community. This enables them to master the language, and learn the Norwegian culture. Most of the interviewees believe that without a stable employment and job opportunities, it will be difficult to fully integrate refugees in Kristiansand (Field data, Feb. 2024). This means that employment has a lot of influence on the achievement of most of the sustainable development goals, such as good health and well-being, housing, food security, good education, and poverty eradication. Most of the interviewees revealed that language and cultural barriers are the major obstacles to employment in Norway.

In the three-way process conception of integration by Garcés-Mascareñas and Pennix (2016), it is realized that the legal dimension has a great influence on the last two dimensions such as the economic and the cultural, which is consistent with the findings of my study. The cultural-religious aspect can also have a similar influence on the socio-economic aspect which I also agree with. For instance, cultural differences and negative portrayals can result in prejudice and discrimination from individuals, organisations, or institutions in the host society. This can then limit the opportunities available to refugees, even if they are legally entitled to access things like housing, education, healthcare, and employment.

Despite the cultural-religious dimension influencing the economic dimension, an individual's social capital is of great relevance when it comes to integration of refugees, employment opportunities and their well-being according to Bourdieu (2011). Bourdieu's concept of social capital makes us understand how people rise to the top. He adds that when people have a lower form of capital such as economic, cultural, social, and symbolic, they are not able to rise in the hierarchy in society. The economic capital as Bourdieu highlights is for example in the form of assets such as housing or money which can help refugees access good education, health care and ensure a good life. Cultural capital is also talked about as the knowledge and the skills and thus an asset an individual may possess. This type of capital can come from education also including completion of the Norwegian introduction programme for example. The social dimension of Bourdieu's argument talks about the connections and the networks refugees have, and the benefits they derive from those networks or relationships. Bourdieu (2011), as well as

Garcés-Mascreñas and Penninx (2016) recognise the need for language and cultural competence and acknowledge how it influences integration especially when it comes to employment.

The findings from my study reveals that if refugees possess all these forms of social capital, integration and getting jobs in Kristiansand would become easier. This is why the Norwegian integration programme is very relevant. The introduction programme seeks to give refugees some form of individual social capital where they can learn the language, have job skills and empower them to meet all the opportunities in the Norwegian society.

Unlike Bourdieu (2011), Garcés-Mascreñas and Penninx (2016) contend that refugees can build connections with each other or individuals in the host society. This can happen by belonging to collective immigrant groups or collective groups in the host society and institutions. The challenge, however, may arise when refugees try building connections with the host society, many times because of cultural and language differences and negative portrayals. I believe that when such experiences occur, refugees may tend to be drawn to regions where they can find people who share similar backgrounds, cultures, or languages. Even though I share the view that being in the presence of familiar individuals and traditions can offer a feeling of ease and protection, particularly when confronted with uncertainty and displacement, it can hinder the process of integration as well.

In addition, Putnam (2000) examines the influence of social capital on the process of integrating and finding work for refugees. Putnam categorises social capital into two distinct types: bonding and bridging. Bonding social capital pertains to the interpersonal relationships within a community, specifically those among family members and intimate friends, that offer emotional assistance and strengthen the collective sense of belonging. In contrast, bridging social capital refers to the establishment of relationships between different social groups. Bridging social capital can provide individuals with access to different resources and opportunities, such as employment. Even though Putnam (2000) did not stress on linking capital in his works, scholars who built on his social capital theory, like Ager and Strang (2008), are of the view that linking capital which is about the connections between individuals or groups in different social strata, and with institutions of power has a great impact on refugee integration. Ager and Strang

stress that when there are good relationships between individuals or groups, and institutions it will facilitate integration and upward mobility for refugees and migrants which I agree with.

Successful integration into the labour market is particularly dependent on refugees having access to bridging and linking social capital as emphasised by Putnam (2000) and Ager and Strang (2008). By facilitating refugees' access to job opportunities, providing them with valuable information, and offering support from the broader community, this initiative improves their prospects for employment and socioeconomic advancement. Putnam's framework emphasises the importance of implementing policies and programmes that encourage these kinds of connections in order to promote the economic integration of refugees. Putnam's argument is relevant to the finding of this study because without bridging social capital refugees will find it difficult to find sustainable jobs in Kristiansand.

Findings from this study reveals that if refugees are able to build strong social connections, that is, through bonding, bridging and linking processes, and also individually have strong social capital it will influence economic and cultural aspect of integration positively in Kristiansand.

Heckmann, (2005) and Polzer (2007) highlight that refugees ability to secure employment leads to successful integration in their environment. That is why Heckmann is of the view that there should be structural adjustments in host societies to enables refugees secure employment for successful integration. Zhou (2019) also contends that the economic bridge of integration places particular emphasis on the host labour market. Zhou states that the calculation entails evaluating the potential economic gains that refugees can obtain in their host nation, as well as the specific benefits that result from their social integration into the economy. This is why the integration policy index of Norway places much emphasizes on employment (Gharti, 2011).

Again, employment falls under the markers and means of Ager and Strang (2008) proposed conceptual framework of how to understand integration. The markers and means correspond to the eight policy-areas that are part of the EU states' Migrant-Integration-Policy-Index (MIPEX), used to measure integration. Employment is directly related to economic independence and future planning, meeting members of society, and providing opportunities to restore self-esteem and self-reliance (Gidley & Oliver, 2015). Findings from this study identifies employment as a major influence on the achievement of most of the sustainable development goals. To achieve

quality education, good housing, reduce hunger and access good health care, structures should be put in place to enable secure employment for refugees.

5.1.3 Social support systems vs. lack of social support systems.

Some of the interviewees in this study assert that social support systems play a crucial role in facilitating integration in Norway. These systems provide refugees with the necessary resources, information, and emotional support to navigate the challenges of adaptation and establish meaningful lives in their new country. According to some of the informants, social support systems play a crucial role in facilitating the successful integration of immigrants into the Norwegian society by fostering social connections, cultural and language competence, promoting well-being, and facilitating access to opportunities. Most of the interviewees added that lack of social support systems makes refugees vulnerable and exposes them to low income and inequality. The interviewees further mentioned the Red Cross, the Kristiansand municipality, NAV as well as some NGOs as key players in the social support system (Field data, Feb. 2024). Amanda asserts that social support systems offer emotional, informational, and a sense of belonging and emotional stability, which are vital for the mental health and well-being of refugees. Once again, the systems in Kristiansand offer refugees practical assistance in their day-to-day activities. This includes helping them navigate public services, find housing, secure employment, access information about local resources, understand cultural norms, and participate in community events. These services aim to facilitate a faster adaptation of refugees to their new environment.

Mary added that the Center for Integration of Refugees in Kristiansand helps refugees from different backgrounds to get a job. They help refugees find the right documents, translate them to Norwegian and help them get into the labour market.

When talking about reducing poverty we also have NAV support system for all refugees. During the introduction programme when refugees are not working, they are given monthly financial assistance till they start to get integrated or find a job. NAV also helps refugees find jobs. They register them into the system, sometimes based on their qualification or the kind of jobs they are looking for, and help them find one. Also, some refugees are taken to companies to learn new skills. These initiatives help to reduce inequalities and poverty.

(Field data, Feb. 2024).

Iban further stated that NGOs like the Red Cross is an integral part of the work when it comes to social support systems for refugees in Norway. According to her there are a lot of volunteer doctors and health professionals that work with the Red Cross in providing good health care and well-being for refugees. She stated that as a doctor she advises and educates refugees on how to stay healthy and have a good life. She again helps in serving food to refugees at the Red Cross. In terms of reducing poverty, she said NAV has financial support for refugees during the introduction programme, and also help them secure jobs (Field data, 2024).

Kaka argues that the Kristiansand municipality is eagerly working to secure employment and access to services exactly because it is of such importance in integration process.

“Everybody in work” project in Kristiansand is another initiative that fosters integration. Kristiansand as a municipality is taking an approach to see why most refugees are not at work. This initiative by the municipality will help to find what the root causes are and tackle them. Another support system has to do with families with difficulties. In this project families with difficulties can connect to the Kristiansand municipality and they will get help on all aspect of their lives. They can get people who will help them solve their problems such as issues with their kids, issues with schools, tax issues, and issues with NAV.

(Field data, 2024).

Kaka further stressed that about 50% of people in this project are immigrant families and they are not there because they are immigrants, they are there because they are poor. But the rate of who is poor and not poor is much higher in the immigrant population, and the reason, according to him, is mostly that they are not able to get sustainable jobs. If you don't have a job, you become part of the low-income family, he stressed (Field data, 2024).

Han added that there are government support for refugees who want to set up their own businesses, and we know that refugees in Norway utilize these opportunities to start their own businesses, for example are many restaurants owned and managed by refugees. There are also other support systems in place:

Refugees who set up businesses in Norway get financial support monthly from the government till their businesses are successful. There are also two areas where

the government supports refugees, and that is in fishing and in agriculture. So, if you are in these two business areas you get financial support from the government, and there are always work to do in these areas. Again, almost everyone who has a legal stay here in Norway is given a personal doctor who takes care of their well-being. All these factors and measures impact positively on their integration.

(Field data; 2024)

5.1.4 Introduction programme.

Another key theme that emerged in the facilitators of social integration is the introduction programme. According to interviewees, the programme places a high importance on language acquisition, equipping refugees with vital Norwegian language proficiency required for effective communication, accessing various services, and actively engaging in societal activities. Mastery of the Norwegian language is essential for refugees to effectively participate in education, employment, and social interactions. The interviewees further added that the programme aids refugees in navigating employment opportunities and integrating into the workforce by offering vocational training, job-seeking assistance, and orientation to the Norwegian labour market (Field data, 2024).

Mary is of the view that having access to employment is crucial for achieving economic autonomy, fostering social cohesion, and facilitating overall integration.

There are a lot of programmes for refugees like the introductory programme and it ensures that refugees first of all learn the language, get a job and also get the needed education. If you come to Norway as someone who doesn't know the language or how to read and write, you start the introduction programme at the very basic level. You learn how to read and write, you become skilled, and you get a job. The integration programme is one of the policies and it's a huge part of the integration process.

(Field data, Feb. 2024).

Han added that the introduction programme is supposed to work as a guide on how to socially integrate refugees, how they can get schooling, jobs, health and well-being and promote an inclusive society where they can be part of the system and everything that happens in Norway.

During the introduction programme refugees are given money monthly to take care of their needs. Refugees are also helped to find jobs based on their request during the introduction programme. Sometimes refugees are sent out to practice or learn new trade.

(Field data, Feb. 2024).

The introduction programme falls under the structural, cultural, interactional, and identification aspects of the social integration framework proposed by Heckmann (2008). The Norwegian introduction programme in Kristiansand seeks to give refugees language and cultural competences, employment, social connections and bonding with the local community. These are the key tenets of the social capital theory by Durkheim (1983). Durkheim asserts that social integration is an outcome of social capital. Social capital refers to the extent and quality of individuals' relationships with both their peers and their communities which is one of the pillars and goals of the introduction programme in Kristiansand.

The introduction programme for refugees in Kristiansand again reflects ideas in Heckmann's (2005) conceptual framework of integration, as well as the markers and means, social connections and the facilitators of Ager and Strang's conceptual framework of integration (Ager and Strang, 2008). We can also see the ideas of Bourdieu's (2011) concept of social capital reflected. This is not to say that there are no challenges of the introduction programme. Findings from this study confirms to the fact that the focus of the introduction programme is in line with these conceptual frameworks and theories of how to, in theory, secure good integration.

5.1.5 Challenging social connections.

One of the major challenges of integration according to some interviewees is building social connections. According to the interviewees, the inability of refugees to build strong social connections with the Kristiansand community can lead to the feelings of isolation and hinder their ability to adapt to their new surroundings. The informants stated that social connections frequently act as conduits for accessing resources such as employment opportunities, housing, education, language and cultural competence. Immigrants and refugees may encounter difficulties in accessing vital resources and understanding unfamiliar systems and institutions if they lack robust social networks. Some of the interviewees are of the view that Kristiansand

is a closed society which makes it difficult for refugees to connect with the true natives of the community thereby impacting negatively on social integration (Field data, 2024).

According to Rich, an actor working with integration,

Norwegians are reserved which makes it difficult for refugees to integrate. I experienced this when I first came to Norway. Sometimes you feel like talking to the people, but they do not want to talk to you maybe because they are too careful and do not know what to expect. But that doesn't help integration. I think it is a general thing within the Scandinavian countries, but Norway is bad.

(Field data, Feb. 2024).

Anita emphasises that the integration of refugees in Kristiansand is greatly impeded by the difficult task of establishing social connections. According to her, this situation arises due to linguistic disparities between the indigenous population and the refugees. These disparities can result in ineffective exchanges of information, and a sense of being socially disconnected for refugees. Lacking a shared language or cultural touchstones, refugees encounter challenges in establishing significant bonds with the local community, a vital aspect of their integration. She states that this can lead to prejudice, which can manifest in both subtle and obvious ways.

Preconceived notions and fixed beliefs about refugees can result in their marginalisation and exclusion from community activities and social networks. This exclusion hinders their ability to form the necessary connections for social integration and can intensify feelings of isolation and alienation.

(Field data, 2024)

Amanda said that in her experience refugees frequently encounter profound isolation and loneliness in the absence of social connections. Social interactions are essential for human well-being, as they provide emotional support, foster a sense of belonging, and establish a network of friends and acquaintances who can offer assistance and guidance. She is of the view that refugees who frequently abandon their families, friends, and familiar social networks, may experience a particularly devastating impact due to the lack of these connections. This can result in feelings of despair and depression.

Social connections frequently play a pivotal role in discovering job prospects. Networking can facilitate job referrals, endorsements, and casual introductions

to prospective employers. Refugees who lack these social connections face a notable disadvantage in the labour market, frequently leading to extended periods of unemployment.

(Field data, 2024)

Durkheim's (1893) concept of mechanical solidarity serves as a unifying force that establishes connections among smaller groups or societies. In preindustrial societies, individuals exhibit robust social connections that are founded upon shared emotions and a collective ethical framework. On the other hand, organic solidarity arises as a consequence of the interdependence facilitated by the division of labour and the complementary nature of interpersonal relationships. According to Durkheim, the phenomenon of such integrations is commonly observed in modern industrialised societies (Durkheim, 1893).

Social integration is a valuable tool that aids in the attainment of specific objectives. It pertains to the arrangement of connections between individuals or groups (LLAVE and Creation, 2010). Therefore, the establishment of interpersonal connections within groups and institutions in a given society or nation may result in enhanced cooperation among individuals, thus promoting social integration.

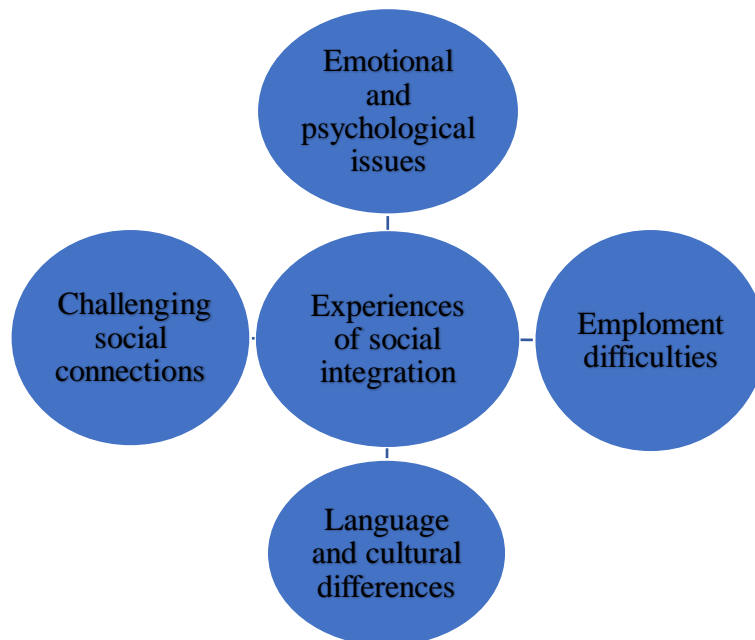
Research suggests that individuals tend to exhibit greater strength and resilience when they are socially connected and have access to social networks. These networks can serve as a valuable resource for establishing new relationships, particularly in unfamiliar environments (Rubin, 2012). Rubin contends that the process of eliminating isolation and providing access to various aspects of community life entails the integration of individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds, regardless of their race, religion, creed, or language. Findings from this study reveals that strong social connections among refugees and Norwegians will lead to the involvement of refugees in community activities. I will in the following present and discuss findings from the refugees standpoint

5.2 How refugees in Kristiansand experience social integration.

The last objective of this study is to examine how refugees in Kristiansand experience social integration. Thematic analysis is also used in this objective as stated in the introduction of this chapter. Under this objective, four major themes emerged from the nine interviews with refugees which are (1) mental and psychological issues, (2) employment challenges, (3)

challenging social connections and (4) language and cultural barriers. These themes are analysed and discussed specifically. Fictive names are used throughout this thesis. See Table 1 in Chapter Three. In the discussions that follow, I will mainly discuss findings from interviews with refugees. However, I will also include findings from actors working with integration for some of the discussion. Here I draw upon the literature review and theories presented in Chapter Two. The document analyses in which was presented and discussed in Chapter Four will be used to support the discussion where necessary.

Figure 7: Themes under refugees experiences of social integration



Field data (2024).

5.2.1 Emotional and psychological issues.

Most of the refugees in this study mentioned that they experience emotional and psychological challenges because of their previous traumatic experiences, difficulties related to being displaced, and the process of adjusting to a new environment. They added that adjusting to a new culture, language, and way of life can be arduous and overwhelming in Kristiansand, impacting negatively on their integration. It has been disclosed that the majority of refugees in Kristiansand experience stress due to the burden of adapting to unfamiliar social norms, customs, and expectations. They also face the fear of encountering discrimination, prejudice,

and marginalisation. Some of them further added that they encounter social isolation and feelings of loneliness as a result of insufficient social connections and support networks in their unfamiliar surroundings.

Noah expressed that one of his major challenges in his early days in Norway was emotional and psychological issues.

I experienced mental and psychological issues when I got to Kristiansand. Again, stress is another thing, imagine you first coming to Norway where you don't know anything about the system, and everything is about technology unlike Eritrea. I didn't also understand the language and the culture, and it was difficult building connections or even talking to people here in Kristiansand. Sometimes you feel lonely, you begin to think about your family back home and ask yourself are they safe? This is because you came from a country where you were persecuted so you live in fear that your family can get killed at any time.

(Field data; 2024)

Carl added,

Even though I was happy to be in Norway, I was just here physically and not mentally. I was always thinking about my family back home and that got me depressed. I used to tell myself I should have just stayed in Congo and died because I came here without any friends or family, and I had to go through the integration process. In the early stages of the integration process, it's just like being a prisoner, you just go to school and come back to sleep. Sometimes you want to go out, but you don't know anywhere or have friends to visit. It is just you and your colleague refugees and some of them don't even speak English. Having my family here would have been the best for me. Sometimes phone conversations don't solve the problems.

(Field data, 2024).

When asked about how they deal with their emotional and psychological issues, most of them revealed that engaging in outdoor activities or having a job to keep one busy was the best solution (Field data, 2024).

This finding was very relevant, and I decided to find out from Kaka, one of the actors working with integration to see if there are emotional and mental support systems for refugees. Kaka stated that even though there are mental support systems for refugees, he thinks the Kristiansand municipality lacks a better understanding of refugees emotional, psychological and mental well-being. According to him, it is a challenge for Norwegian psychologists to understand the emotional and psychological issues of refugees because of cultural differences.

We are trying to see how we can create more structures, bring people from the same society to speak to each other and facilitate a dialogue between refugees of the same background, or have one to one interaction with psychologists. It is difficult for psychologists here to understand the emotional and psychological needs of people from different countries. The approach is totally different. As a community it's a challenge for us, we are trying our best and reaching out to more people for solutions. Maybe it could be the Imam or the Priest and not even an educated psychologist. So, the structures do exist, but it is difficult to understand people. Maybe we should create something different for people without a Norwegian background. We should understand cultures when dealing with emotional issues.

(Field data, 2024).

Again, when I reached out to Mary, another personnel working with integration to find out the mental and emotional support systems for refugees, she stated that some activities have been put in place to prevent loneliness and the mental illness that refugees go through in the municipality.

We sometimes ask refugees and asylum seekers what are the special things they want or wish to do? We have been bowling with them, we go to the cinema, the concert and the cultural house. All these activities give refugees good experiences and help prevent emotional issues and loneliness. In the Red Cross, we do different assessments. We get information about different needs and these needs change all the time. Now we have the men's group. Men are expressing loneliness so we are trying to see how we can have outdoor activities for men to prevent loneliness. Every time we get some needs, we assess to see if different organisations are doing the same thing or not, are we the right arena to do it, can

we help them or is it the municipality's role? We always do that to prevent having a lot of activities that are the same within different organizations.

(Field data, 2024)

Findings from my study reveal that refugees who migrate together with their families experience less emotional and psychological issues than those who do not. According to Bernard, an interviewee among the refugees, the reason why he did not experience severe emotional and psychological issues is because he came with his family and did not have to always think about the situation back home.

Even though there were difficulties in building connections and with language and cultural barriers, that did not affect me mentally and psychologically because I had my family to rely on.

(Field data, 2024).

The process of integrating refugees is strongly connected to the significant issues of compromised emotional and psychological health. Bempong et al. (2019) argue that the mental well-being of refugees is negatively impacted by multiple factors, such as being exposed to violence, migrating alone between countries, and experiencing internalising difficulties. Trauma is a common and significant mental health issue among refugees. During different stages of the refugee experience, trauma manifests in various forms, including before migration, after migration, and following displacement. Refugees frequently face a variety of distressing situations, including torture, violence, murder, rape, atrocities, starvation, and imprisonment. These circumstances present significant obstacles to their successful assimilation into new communities (Bemak & Chung, 2017). The decrease in mental well-being among refugees has a noticeable impact on their capacity to successfully navigate social situations, and form significant connections with individuals in their host community which is consistent with this study's findings.

In addition, Fazel et al. (2012) have identified cultural shock as a prominent impediment to the acclimatisation process among refugees. This phenomenon is observed to occur in six clearly defined stages. The factors that contribute to the experiences of refugees include stress, a sense of loss and deprivation, isolation from members of the new culture and homeland and confusion about their roles and expectations. Additionally, living in an unpredictable environment with limited access to necessary resources and basic infrastructure, along with the temporary nature

of refugee shelters, can cause emotional and psychological distress among refugee populations. Typically, the deteriorating mental health of refugees impairs their capacity to actively engage in integration initiatives. The declining effectiveness of integration programmes is accompanied by an obstacle to the successful assimilation of refugees into the host community as Fazel et al. argue.

Findings from the study reveals that for refugees to reduce their emotional and psychological challenges there should be strong social connections. The inability of refugees to build strong social connections would lead to further isolation in Kristiansand which will have a negative impact on their mental health issues. By enhancing social bonds and cultivating community solidarity, societies can bolster the psychological well-being and overall welfare of refugees, while facilitating their seamless assimilation into the community. There should also be emotional and psychological supports systems for refugees that are culturally centered. Imams or Priests could be involved in dealing with emotional and psychological issues of refugees in Kristiansand, as also suggested by Kaka.

5.2.2 Challenging social connections.

My findings reveal that refugees in Kristiansand face the difficulty of establishing social connections. This was also a major theme discussed under the challenges of integration as seen from those working with integration. Most of the interviewees among refugees reported that they are experiencing significant challenges in establishing connections with most of the local population in Kristiansand. They perceive the challenge to stem from cultural disparities, unfamiliar social conventions, and their lack of proficiency in the Norwegian language. Additionally, some respondents expressed that Kristiansand is an insular and reticent community, where individuals are uninterested in establishing relationships with unfamiliar individuals. This has hindered their capacity to acquire proficiency in the Norwegian language and assimilate into the culture. An important obstacle that arises as a result of this situation is the scarcity of job opportunities for refugees (Field data, 2024). Noah stated that the environment here, the people, and their way of life is also different from Syria. He added that making friends and getting to know people isn't that easy.

Everyone sees you as new and they are also not comfortable with you. Sometimes it was difficult going out because you don't even know the place, and I had no one to go out with, so it was very boring for me.

(Field data, 2024).

In their opinion this has hindered their capacity to acquire proficiency in the Norwegian language and assimilate into the culture. An important obstacle that arises as a result of this situation is the scarcity of job opportunities for refugees. Refugees also believe that most institutions in Kristiansand tend to prioritise hiring individuals whom they are familiar with thus have established trust and connections with (Field data, 2024).

When asked about how refugees build social connections in Kristiansand, they stated that they do that by going to church, mosque or at their workplaces. Some of them also added that they are able to build more connections in the summer than in the winter because there are always a lot of activities going on during summertime. This gives them the opportunity to meet different and new people.

Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx (2016) argue that the association refugees have with a host society impacts positively on integration. The level of receptiveness towards newcomers, the way they perceive and interact with individual refugees, and the functioning of their institutions could significantly impact the integration of refugees. Studies have demonstrated that prior to 2002, when Germany lacked a government integration policy, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), specifically trade unions and churches, played a vital role in facilitating the integration of guest workers and their families. Even though Norway has integration policies and measures in place for refugee integration, NGOs and society groups are still relevant when it comes to integration of refugees. There is therefore a need to include immigrant groups and NGOs and involve them actively in the integration process in Kristiansand.

Blau (1960) argues that when individuals in a group have a natural attraction towards each other, social integration will prevail which this study agrees with. Individuals who aspire to fully integrate into a community, group, or society are expected to create a positive impression among their peers (Amelina & Faist, 2008). However, in specific instances, the resulting rivalry for popularity can lead to defensive mechanisms that hinder the process of social integration (Jackson et al., 2016). In addition to physical characteristics, the quality of approachability can also have an impact on acceptance. People who want to fit in often make an effort to actively seek and develop interpersonal relationships. Social integration refers to the state in which individuals in a social group are linked to both the group as a whole and to each other through different connections (Blau, 1960; Silk et al., 2009).

Again, Ager and Strang (2008) extensively incorporated Putnam's (2000) ideas on social capital into their theoretical framework to delineate the essential elements of social connection, specifically denoted as social "links," "bonds," and "bridges." A correlation exists between refugees and state structures through social connections. Social networks, or social bonds, are the connections that exist between individuals in a society. In addition, they play a role in providing emotional support, enhancing self-esteem, and boosting confidence (Atfield et al., 2007 as cited in Strang & Ager, 2010, p. 597). Strand and Ager (2010) assert that social networks are crucial in promoting social integration which was also revealed in the findings of this study.

5.2.3 Language and cultural barriers.

Language and cultural barriers are one of the themes under refugees' experiences which was expected. Some of the interviewees stated that lack of proficiency in the Norwegian language, poses challenges in their ability to effectively communicate with residents, accessing essential services, or secure employment opportunities. According to them, their limited proficiency in Norwegian language and lack of cultural understanding have also impeded their access to crucial services such as healthcare, employment as well as hindered their ability to establish social relationships. Another major challenge they mentioned is social isolation, and difficulty in forming meaningful relationships in Kristiansand which has intensified feelings of isolation, anxiety, and depression as a result of language and cultural barriers.

Bernard revealed that,

The Arabic culture is totally different from the Norwegian culture. Our way of life in the Middle East is different from that of Norway and until you are able to fully integrate it becomes difficult. When I got here, I didn't speak the language to understand the jokes, and to be able to connect with people. The food here in Norway is different. The weather is different, the people as well, and the environment. Again, I realized that Norwegians are more reserved and shy. Sometimes you just need one person to talk to and there is no one there for you. When I got here it was everyone for him or herself but God for us all. I think the language was the problem as I said, making it difficult to make friends.

(Field data, 2024).

Daniel stated that the Norwegian culture is different from that of Congo. He added that things that can be done in his home country are forbidden here in Norway.

You can't compare Norway to Africa or Congo where I come from. In Congo, you can just wake up from your bed and go to your brother, sister or your relatives house, sit down, and eat with them. Here, until you are invited, you can't do that. There are no formal invitations to someone's house or home in Congo, but you can't do that here. In Congo I can just go to my neighbours house ask for salt or even take his food stuffs in his absence and inform him later which is not done here. When I came to Norway, I nearly had this sickness called pneumonia in the winter because I didn't know how to dress to suit the weather. I used to dress anyhow like I was in Congo which affected my health. I went to the doctor, and he advised me of my dressing, and I had to spend like 4000 Kroner to buy cloths that could keep me warm.

(Field data; 20249)

Most of the informants believe that language and cultural barrier leads to exclusion and prevent them from engaging in activities in Kristiansand as well as building social connections.

Bhattarai (2015) contends that embracing cultural diversity is crucial for effectively integrating refugees, as it promotes inclusivity and support within their new country. Conversely, the failure to adjust to changes can lead to negative outcomes that impede the integration of refugees which I agree with. In 2019, Heiligers conducted a study that examined the process of resettling Bhutanese refugees in the Netherlands. The study discovered that the five most arduous aspects related to integration included the mastery of the local language, significant cultural differences, the acquisition of rights and citizenship, access to education and employment opportunities, and the achievement of self-sufficiency which is similar to the findings of this study.

5.2.4 Employment difficulties.

Most of the refugees interviewed in this study reported facing substantial obstacles when accessing job opportunities. They added that their limited command of the Norwegian language hampers their ability to effectively communicate during job interviews and in their day-to-day interactions in the workplace. As already mentioned, some of them believe institutions in Kristiansand prefer to employ people they know and trust, and therefore, their inability to establish social connections with people

in Kristiansand has prevented their opportunity to secure jobs. Furthermore, some of them added that it has become challenging for them to get their education approved also impacting negatively on their opportunity to get jobs.

Karim, a fellow refugee contends that without the language one is restricted to certain things such as employment. He added that institutions in Kristiansand should give more opportunities to refugees and other immigrants so they can access jobs to ensure diversity.

As I told you earlier, I went to a place to look for a job and they said I cannot work here because I do not speak the language and I asked them why? They told me some of their customers are comfortable with customer representatives who speak Norwegian, so they prefer people who have Norwegian skills. They should consider refugees competencies rather than basing it only on the language.

(Field data, 2024).

Aba added that it took him almost two years to get a job as a dishwasher. Even with this, he got the job through the help of a colleague. He further added that refugees in Kristiansand have difficulty of getting their education or professional certificate approved here in Norway. This has relegated them to the most difficult jobs in Kristiansand like dishwashing and cleaning.

It is also difficult getting a new job. I studied agricultural engineering, but it is difficult for me working with my certificate here. Maybe I would have to do practice or upgrade my certificate. Some companies even want you to have experience in Norwegian companies before they employ you. Sometimes what you studied in your country is not even recognized here and you cannot use your certificate.

(Field data, 2024).

To gain a better understanding of the situation on the ground, there was a need to enquire more from employees and volunteers working with integration. Kaka, one of the actors confirmed that language, cultural competence, and social connections have a major role to play when it comes to employment in Kristiansand. He stated that without knowledge of the Norwegian language and culture and strong social connections it is difficult to secure a sustainable employment in Kristiansand.

I think many companies are afraid to take the chance in employing people they don't know and from different cultures. I believe that the reluctance to hire someone based on uncertainty is not necessarily an act of racism. Companies and institutions are hesitant to employ individuals and offer them a salary of 30,000 NOK or more when they are unsure of how that person will impact the job.

(Field data, 2024).

In order to find out why educated refugees are having difficulty of approving their education in Norway as refugees stressed, Kaka further added that NOKUT is responsible for verifying or approving refugees' education here in Norway. He asserts that it is difficult to approve or verify refugees' education from the third world because their education is non-existing, or their countries do not have the same educational requirement as Norway.

If you come from for example Russia, then we will know already that if you have a medical education there it is a very good education. But if you come from a country in the third world, we don't necessarily know that. So, there are international standards and a lot of people have come from war areas. For example, Syria, their university papers are non-existing. The first thing the Russians did in Syria was to bomb their universities during the war, also in the Balkans, so all their files are non-existing. In Norway we have this entity called NOKUT, they are in charge of accepting education. So, what they do is you have to send your papers to NOKUT if you come from a country that doesn't have agreement with Norway. So NOKUT decides if your university degree should be accepted in Norway.

(Field data, 2024).

But Rich, one of the personnels working with integration is also of the view that the inability of refugees to get their education approved does not only contribute to unemployment but adds to their emotional and psychological challenges. He added that refugees who do not get their education approved are considered uneducated and that puts them under a lot of stress and reduces their social and financial status because they end up taking low paid jobs like cleaning. He is of the view that there should be interview-based accreditation for refugees who are struggling to get their education approved to reduce unemployment among the refugee population.

Ager and Strang (2008) contends that getting a job in a new country can be difficult in some cases because of things like previous work experiences and qualifications not being recognised. As a result, a lot of refugees find it difficult to find work in their new country. Due to this, the ability of refugees to find employment directly affects their ability to successfully integrate into their new country. The findings in this study are consistent with Ager and Strang's study.

5.3 Concluding personal reflections.

According to the framework of Garcés-Mascareñas and Pennix (2016) the integration of refugees first starts with the political dimension. As we have seen in Chapter Four, in Norway, the integration of refugees is not possible when refugees are not cleared and accepted into the state. This is why it is necessary for refugees to go through the legal process when they arrive in Norway. After Garcés-Mascareñas and Pennix political dimension comes the economic and the cultural- religious dimensions. Again, Heckmann (2008) also talks about structural, cultural, interactional, and identification aspects of social integration which are all relevant. If you examine the Norwegian integration policies carefully, you realise that the policies fall under both Garcés-Mascareñas and Pennix (2016), Heckmann's (2005) as well as Ager and Strang's (2008) conceptualizations. All these are also relevant and influences the social capital theory either from the view of Bourdieu (2011) and Putnam as stressed by Ager and Strang (2008). Ager and Strang talk about employment, housing, education and health under the Markers and Means, social bridges, social bonds, and social links under social connections, as well as language and cultural, and safety and stability under the facilitators and right and citizenship under the foundation. All these help in achieving inclusive and sustainable development which is the goal of this thesis.

Having said this, Heckmann (2005) and Ager and Strang (2008) fail to tell us how these dimensions influence each other unlike Garcés-Mascareñas and Pennix (2016). Garcés-Mascareñas and Pennix reveal how the political dimension influences both the economic and the cultural-religious dimensions. We cannot talk about the last two dimensions of integration in Norway without first dwelling on the political dimension. Despite the legal guarantee of access for all residents, institutions may impede access or fair outcomes due to their historically and culturally influenced ways of operating. This can occur, for example, when institutions fail to consider refugees' history, cultural and religious backgrounds, or language abilities. Therefore, it is crucial that public institutions operate effectively and have the ability to adjust

to increasing diversity. Integration and exclusion are reciprocal concepts at this level. Again, the two authors explain clearly how the cultural dimension also influences the economic dimension of integration. The integration of refugees into the economic dimension after the political dimension is mostly influenced by the cultural-religious dimension.

The reason is that when there are prejudices and negative portrayals towards refugees, or when a host society fails to accept refugees because of cultural differences, it will become difficult for them to secure jobs after going through education or job training. Refugees may have acquired the necessary education and job training they need, but when they fail to understand the culture and language of the host society, getting employment will become difficult. Thinking about this, Bourdieu (2011) reflects that it is important to have social capital such as language and cultural competence. One of the actors working with integration revealed to me that even though she is a doctor and is born in Norway, her knowledge and skills has not been enough to secure her a job. She added that because she has a foreign name, she sometimes finds it a bit difficult to find a job. She said due to this she always writes in her CV she was born here, speaks good Norwegian and has lived here all her life. Even though I acknowledge the relevance of Bourdieu's concept of social capital, I believe that in a society with high discrimination, refugees will still struggle to secure employment after gaining language and cultural competence. While I concur with Garcés-Mascareñas and Pennix (2016) that the cultural-religious aspect does impact the economic dimension, it is important to note that solely focusing on this aspect in all societies may neglect the wider structural factors that influence economic opportunities and outcomes for refugees. These factors include labour market dynamics, immigration, refugee policies, and access to education and social services. Failure to consider these structural factors can result in an inadequate comprehension of the mechanisms that contribute to economic inequalities among migrant or refugee populations.

In examining the challenges and opportunities of integrating refugees by actors to ensure inclusive and sustainable development, I realised that there are language and cultural influences in both the opportunities and the challenges of integration. Three of the correlated themes such as language and cultural competence vs. language and cultural barriers, employment vs. unemployment, and social support systems vs. challenging social support systems are somewhat influenced by language and culture. Actors working with the integration of refugees revealed that language and cultural competences enables refugees to secure jobs and their ability to utilize social support systems. Most institutions in Norway prefer to employ people

who they trust can deliver. Sometimes trust comes through social connections and how well people get to know each other. When I came to Norway in 2021, as part of my ways to build relationships and establish connections with true native Norwegians, I had to resort to online platforms as it was difficult making friends outside or physically. Even though I was able to make some Norwegian friends online, the conversation always ceases when they ask me if I speak Norwegian and I say no. It was only easy for me to make Norwegian friends at work, at the club, at church or in school with Norwegian classmates. Maybe the situation would have been different if I was in the UK, or the US as English is my official language coming from Ghana.

Themes such as mental and psychological issues, employment challenges, challenging social connections, language and cultural barriers under refugees' experiences of social integration are also influenced most by cultural and language barriers. Kaka revealed that even though there are mental health support systems for refugees, the municipality lacks a better understanding of how to deal with the situation because of refugees background and cultural differences. Again, it was revealed in this study that most of the refugees that formed part of this study have higher education. Their difficulty of securing sustainable jobs came as a result of language and cultural differences and lack of recognition of their educational certificates. If you look at the Norwegian online job sites such as Jobbnorge.no, Finn.no and Arbeidsplassen.nav.no, almost all the jobs advertised there require language and cultural competence.

Furthermore, the inability of refugees to build connections with the host society can result in the formation of ethnic enclaves and slows down integration. While these enclaves may provide a sense of comfort, security, and support, they can also reinforce social barriers, hinder cross-cultural engagement, and perpetuate stereotypes and biases. I think that empowering and involving immigrants' groups in the integration process will be of great relevance. For inclusive and sustainable development, measures should be put in place to enable refugees access to sustainable job opportunities, get well integrated into the Norwegian system and have the same opportunities without discrimination. Coming from Ghana I am not afraid to say Norway is one of the best countries in the world in terms of peace, good life, environment, education, and social support systems. For this reason, a strong social connection between refugees and Norwegians and social support systems can impact positively on refugees for inclusive and sustainable development, and help adding to all these accolades Norway has on the international stage.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion and Recommendations.

6.0 Introduction

This is the concluding chapter of the study. This chapter entails the conclusion and policy recommendations based on the findings.

6.1 Conclusion.

As mentioned in the thesis introduction (Chapter 1), the issue of immigrants, specifically refugees, remains pertinent due to the persistent occurrence of global conflicts and other heinous acts. When individuals migrate to Western countries in order to secure their safety and improve the prospects of their children, they frequently face substantial challenges in fully assimilating into their new societies. Although Western countries make significant efforts to integrate refugees and improve their quality of life, the key concern revolves around the integration policies implemented in different host nations and their long-term viability. This study specifically centers on social integration of refugees for inclusive and sustainable development. The study gathered qualitative data by employing document analysis and empirical methods, particularly semi-structured interviews. The use of purposive and snowball sampling techniques allowed for the collection of a substantial sample size comprising 17 informants. The gathered data was transcribed and coded prior to analysis using the thematic analysis approach. This study seeks to examine three research objectives; the integration policies and programmes for refugees in Norway, factors that aid and hinder the integration of refugees in relation to the sustainable development goals from actors working with integration perspectives, and refugees experiences of social integration in Kristiansand

After examining Norway's integration policies and programmes for refugees, it is evident that the country has made significant advancements in fostering inclusive and sustainable development. Norway has created a favourable environment for refugees to reconstruct their lives and make substantial contributions to society through the implementation of a diverse strategy that encompasses favourable policies, comprehensive programmes, and a strong commitment to humanitarian principles. The admirable aspect of Norway's approach lies in its emphasis on early intervention and provision of sustained assistance. Norway facilitates the empowerment of refugees through the provision of language courses, education, vocational training, employment opportunities, housing and welfare support systems. This enables them

to achieve self-sufficiency and integration into society. Furthermore, the nation's focus on social inclusivity and community involvement enables the removal of barriers and promotes understanding between refugees and the wider population.

The study identified four key factors that contribute to the successful integration of refugees for inclusive and sustainable development. These factors are language and cultural competences, social support systems, employment, and the introduction programme. The examination of language and cultural skills, social support systems, job prospects, and the introduction programme underscores the interconnectedness of these elements in promoting the social integration of refugees. The challenges of integrating refugees give rise to several themes, including cultural and language barriers, employment difficulties, challenging social support systems, and weak social connections. In order to foster equitable and enduring communities, it is important for societies to tackle the intricacies and inequalities within various aspects and embrace a comprehensive strategy that takes into account the distinct requirements and backgrounds of refugees.

Refugees living in Kristiansand face multiple challenges when it comes to integrating into society, including mental and psychological problems, difficulties finding employment, struggles in forming social connections, and obstacles arising from differences in language and culture. The presence of trauma and displacement among refugees frequently leads to the development of mental health disorders, which subsequently impede the advancement of social integration. Despite the positive impact on refugees' resilience and well-being, there is lack of comprehension regarding the mental and psychological challenges faced by refugees in Kristiansand. Refugees also face the urgent problem of unemployment. Despite receiving vocational training and support in job placement, refugees encounter obstacles such as language proficiency requirements, biased hiring practices, and a lack of recognition for their foreign qualifications. To achieve economic independence and agenda 2030 of the sustainable development goals, it is crucial to tackle the obstacles posed by structural barriers and encourage the adoption of inclusive hiring practices for refugees.

Moreover, refugees residing in Kristiansand encounter the obstacle of adapting to unfamiliar social norms and networks, impeding the integration process. They also encounter challenges in establishing social bonds and developing a sense of inclusion in their new societies as a result of their seclusion and marginalisation. Refugees residing in Kristiansand encounter linguistic and cultural barriers that impede their engagement in community endeavours and hinder their

personal development. Language and cultural barriers present challenges for refugees in accessing employment, education, and social services, leading to difficulties in these areas. In order to address these issues, it is essential to offer support for mental well-being, enforce policies that promote equal opportunities in employment, encourage active participation in the community, and facilitate the integration of language and culture. By engaging in cooperative endeavours to surmount these challenges and advocating for comprehensive policies, Kristiansand can efficiently receive and offer assistance to refugees.

6.2 Recommendations based on findings.

Improve and expand mental health support services:

The municipality should allocate additional financial resources and offer assistance to enhance culturally sensitive mental health services that are specifically customised to address the unique needs of refugees residing in Kristiansand. This should entail collaborating with mental health professionals and local organisations to develop targeted interventions addressing the psychological impact of trauma, anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues faced by refugees. In addition, healthcare providers and social workers should receive training sessions on culturally sensitive strategies to assist refugees in maintaining optimal mental health and overall well-being.

Fostering social connections.

The municipality and civil society organizations should provide assistance and coordinate community-led initiatives and events that encourage active participation and facilitate cultural interchange between refugees and the wider community. This entails establishing support groups and peer mentorship programs to foster connections among refugees, facilitate the exchange of experiences, and provide access to social support networks. Additionally, the municipality should actively encourage the involvement of refugees in local governance and community activities in order to foster a sense of inclusion and empowerment.

Enhance accessibility to job prospects:

Employers and integration institutions should collaborate to develop inclusive recruitment strategies and implement tailored job training initiatives that address the specific needs of refugees. It is necessary to establish language and vocational training programs that are specifically designed to meet the unique demands of the local job market, equipping refugees with the necessary skills required to obtain significant job opportunities. Additionally, the

municipality should provide support in verifying credentials and assisting individuals in navigating the job application process, including offering workshops on resume writing and sessions to prepare for interviews.

By implementing these recommendations, Kristiansand can endeavour to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for refugees, improving their psychological and emotional well-being, fostering social connections, expanding employment opportunities, and addressing language and cultural barriers. In order to achieve sustainable and inclusive development for the entire community's benefit, Kristiansand can harness the diverse skills and contributions of refugees.

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Research Consent Form.

Title of research topic: Social Integration of refugees for Inclusive and Sustainable Development.

Researcher: Moses Agyemang

Research Supervisor: Prof. Hege Bergljot Wallevik

Institution: University of Agder (UiA)

Introduction: I am Moses Agyemang, a master's student at University of Agder in Kristiansand, Norway. I am conducting a study on social integration of refugees for inclusive and sustainable development. I would like to invite you to partake in this research in order to comprehend the obstacles and possibilities in accomplishing sustainable integration as well as refugees experiences of social integration. This study seeks to gather insights from the Red Cross, the Kristiansand municipality, Norway Multicultural Center as well as refugees themselves.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to examine refugees experiences of social integration as well as key institutions like the Red Cross, Norway Multicultural Center and Kristiansand municipality with regards to social integration and factors influencing the social integration process of refugees in Norway in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals. The information gathered will contribute to a better understanding of the experiences and perspectives of both the respondents from the Red Cross, Kristiansand Kommune, Norway Multicultural Center and refugees, in the context of SDGs.

Procedure: If you agree to participate, I will take the opportunity to interview you for a maximum of 45 minutes. The interview will be related to your experiences, perspectives, and professional insights on the social integration of refugees in Norway in relation to some SDGs and would be recorded.

Confidentiality: All information provided will be kept strictly confidential. Your responses will be anonymized, and no individual responses will be attributed to any specific person or organization. Only the researcher will have access to the raw data.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without providing a reason, and your decision will not affect your relationship with any associated entities.

Contact Information: If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may contact:

1. Researcher

Moses Agyemang

(mosesa@uia.no or +4792079145)

2. Research Supervisor

Prof. Hege Bergljot Wallevik

(hege.wallevik@uia.no)

Signing below indicates your voluntary agreement to participate in this research study and your acknowledgement that you have read and understood the information provided above.

Signed: _____ **Date** _____.

Name: _____

APPENDIX I

Interview Guide for Red Cross

Section A

Q1. Can you share your thoughts and experiences with refugees social integration in relation to reducing inequalities (SDG 10), reducing poverty (SDG 1), ensuring good health and well-being (SDG3), and ensuring decent work and economic growth (SDG 8)?

Q2. What do you think are some of the key factors that play a significant role in social integration of refugees for an inclusive society?

Q3. How do you see government policies and programmes in facilitating social integration of refugees aligning with the goals set as part of SDG agenda?

Q4. In your opinion, what are the significant factors that influence refugees ability to access quality education (SDG4), good health and well-being (SDG3), and decent work and economic growth (SDG8)? How do these factors impact their overall integration into the Norwegian society?

Q5. Could you give examples of successful initiatives or strategies that have effectively promoted social integration of refugees in Norway, particularly in alignment with the SDGs such as access to quality education, good health care, reducing inequalities and decent work and economic growth?

Q6. In your experience, how do cultural and language differences influence the process of social integration for refugees? Additionally, what proactive steps can be taken to support refugees in their integration process to ensure an inclusive society as part of the SDGs?

Q7. Are there any specific SDGs that you believe should be addressed in order to improve the social integration of refugees in Norway?

Q8. Can you identify any unique strengths or resources that refugees bring to Norwegian society that could be leveraged for better social integration and SDG attainment based on your interactions with immigrant communities?

Q9. What recommendations do you have for policymakers, NGOs, and community organizations in Norway to improve refugees social integration in a way that is consistent with the SDGs?

Q10. How, in your opinion, can civil society and local communities play a more active role in assisting refugees social integration?

Q11. Do you have anything to add as far as this interview is concerned?

Section B (Personal Information)

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Level of education
4. Nationality

APPENDIX II

Interview Guide for Kristiansand municipality and Norway Multicultural Centre.

Section A

Q1. Can you share your thoughts and experiences with refugees social integration in relation to reducing inequalities (SDG 10), reducing poverty (SDG 1), ensuring good health and well-being (SDG3), and ensuring decent work and economic growth (SDG 8)?

Q2. In your experience, how do cultural and language differences influence the process of social integration for refugees?

Q3. In what ways are refugees integrated culturally into the Norwegian society?

Q4. How do you perceive the attitudes of the Norwegian community towards refugees and immigrants?

Q5. In what ways can you interpret the cultural challenges refugees go through in Kristiansand?

Q6. What resources or support systems have been helpful in cultural integration of refugees in Kristiansand?

Q7. In your opinion, what policies or initiatives could be implemented to improve the cultural integration of refugees in Norway?

Q8. In what ways do you think we can achieve an inclusive society when society is made of different cultures and people?

Q9. Can you identify any unique strengths or resources that refugees bring to Norwegian society that could be leveraged for better social integration and SDG attainment based on your interactions with immigrant communities?

Q10. What are your views on professional or educated refugees who struggle to get their education approved here in Norway?

Q11. What are the challenges refugees go through during integration?

Q12. What do you think are some of the ways refugees can connect with the local community and build networks?

Q13. What are your views on refugees mental and psychological well-being and how are they addressed?

Q14. Can you elaborate on social support systems for refugees in Norway?

Q15. Do you have anything to add as far as this interview is concerned?

Section B (Personal Information)

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Level of education
4. Nationality
5. Number of children

APPENDIX III

Interview guide for refugees.

Section A

- Q1.** Can you share your personal experiences of the social integration process since your arrival in Norway?
- Q2.** In your opinion, what are the most significant factors that have influenced the process of social integration for you and other refugees in Kristiansand?
- Q3.** What has been some of the factors that has enabled you to connect with the local community and access essential services?
- Q4.** What cultural differences have you encountered and how have they influenced your efforts to integrate into Norwegian society.?
- Q5.** Can you describe any instances where you felt particularly welcomed or excluded in the local community? What made those experiences memorable for you?
- Q6.** In what specific programs or initiatives aimed at supporting refugees' integration have you participated in and what are your experiences?
- Q7.** What impact has the availability of educational and training opportunities had on your social integration process?
- Q8.** What activities or programs have you found helpful in building connections and relationships with Norwegians and other immigrants?
- Q9.** Have you encountered any psychological or emotional difficulties as a result of your social integration? Are there any coping mechanisms or support mechanisms that you have found to be effective?
- Q10.** Are there any governmental policies or programmes that you believe have had a positive impact on your social integration experience? Are there any areas where you believe policy changes or improvements are required?
- Q11.** What recommendations or strategies would you make based on your personal experiences to address and alleviate the challenges that refugees face on their path to social integration?
- Q12.** Do you have anything to add as far as this interview is concerned?

Section B (Personal Information)

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Marital status
4. Number of children
5. Country of origin
6. Level of education?
7. Number of years in Norway.