

Investigation of the challenges Ukrainian, Afghan, and Somali refugees and immigrants face in accessing the labour market in Norway

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List of Abbreviations

FPRW: Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work

ILO: International Labour Organization

NIP: Norwegian Introduction Programme for Newly Arrived Immigrants

OSH: Occupational Safety and Health

UNHCR: United Nations High Commission for Refugees

NESH: Norwegian National Committee for Research Ethics in Social Sciences and Humanities

IOM: International Organization of Migration

EU: European Union

UN: United Nations

NSD: Norwegian Social Science Data Services

IPA: Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

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Abstract

(1) Background: In recent times, there has been increased attention on issues faced by refugees and immigrants in accessing the labour markets of their host countries. Most of these people face numerous challenges. The current study sought to examine the experiences refugees and immigrants face in interacting with Norway's labour market; with the aim of identifying the main barriers that hinder their access to this market. The study used a sample of Ukrainian, Afghan, and Somali refugees to compare their experiences with regard to interaction with the Norwegian labour sector. *(2) Methods:* data for the study was collected through qualitative semi-structured interviews with 15 respondents residing in Bergen, Norway. Five respondents from each country: Afghanistan, Somalia, and Ukraine. Data was analysed using the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) methodology which aims to examine how individuals make sense of important experiences in their lives. *(3) Findings/ Results:* The findings showed that refugees and immigrants from the three countries faced discrimination in accessing the labour market based on factors such as language proficiency, accent, name, appearance, religion/culture, nationality, education, gender, age, and family status. While all groups experienced discrimination based on education, language proficiency, accent, nationality, gender, and age; Ukrainians fared better in terms of appearance, name, religion/culture, and family status than Afghans and Somalis. Language proficiency and education were perceived as crucial factors in accessing the Norwegian labour market. Programs and activities run by the government and other humanitarian organizations are also shown to be crucial in helping immigrants and refugees integrate into Norway's labour market. *(4) Conclusions:* The findings of the study highlight that there are structural and institutional factors that result in refugees and immigrants being discriminated against in their interaction with Norway's labour market. From this and based on the institutional theory, the study recommends that it is necessary to disrupt the existing practices and norms and in so doing establish new institutional logics that are more welcoming and accepting for the immigrants and refugees. The specific recommendations are: Enhance language training efforts for refugees and immigrants; offer refugees and immigrants formal education; educate the general public on the importance of diversity and inclusivity; and introduce pertinent integration policy reforms

Keywords: refugees and immigrants; integration, Norwegian labour market; interpretative phenomenological analysis; subjective experiences.

1. Introduction

This section presents a brief background on the research issue, its relevance, and then outlines the questions and objectives of the current study. The section also provides the scope and limitations of the study as well as the structure of the whole paper.

1.1 Background of the Study

According to Schein et al. (2019), the number of individuals displaced from their countries because of natural disasters, human rights violations, and conflicts has been on the rise in recent times. Most of the refugees usually come from countries that are affected by wars. Traditionally, the common countries where people have experienced displacement because of war have been Afghanistan and Somalia. In the case of Afghanistan, the United States invaded the country in the year 2001. This is after the Taliban refused to hand over their leader Osama bin Laden following the September 11, 2001 attacks on the U.S. (Pelelunga, 2016) This led to a long period of war between the U.S.-led coalition and the Taliban leading to the displacement of millions of civilians. In Somalia, there is a major ongoing civil war that started in 2009 following the conflict between the forces of the Federal Government of Somalia and various militant group factions. The Somalian government has been assisted by African Union peacekeeping troops under the command of the United Nations (Williams, 2009). This persisting war triggered a massive exodus of people from Somalia. Ukraine has been added to this list with the ongoing Russia invasion of their country. In February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale military invasion of Ukraine leading to the deaths of over 900 civilians and millions of Ukrainians fleeing to neighbouring countries (CFR, 2022).

The displaced people moving from these countries to other nations become either refugees or asylum seekers. Refugees are people who have fled their home country because of fear of being persecuted or the risk of death. These people move to other nations to seek protection (Carens, 2014). Asylum seekers, on the other hand, are people who have fled their country in search of safety but have not yet received official refugee status (Long, 2013). Apart from these two categories, there are also immigrants who are people who move to other countries in search of work, studies, or to live with relatives. For most people seeking asylum, protection, or greener pastures, Europe has been a preferred destination and one of the leading host nations is Norway.

The UNHCR (2021) explains that for many years now, Norway has made significant contributions to global refugee protection through its well-established asylum and reception programme and also advancing important integration efforts. Norway also provides crucial financial aid to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). The country played a leading role in the enactment of the 1951 Convention and is also a state party to both the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions (UNHCR, 2021). For these reasons, Norway is considered a sanctuary for individuals in need of asylum and protection.

For immigrants and refugees, it is crucial to integrate quickly into the system of the host nations. Harder et al. (2018) describe integration as the extent to which asylum seekers, refugees, and immigrants acquire knowledge and capacity to build a fulfilling and successful life in the host society. One way of achieving this is through getting employment and becoming able to provide for oneself or family. Therefore, access to the labour market is seen as an important element of integration. Norway has an important policy to help refugees and asylum seekers with integrating into their system; the Norwegian Introduction Programme for Newly Arrived Immigrants (NIP) (Djuve & Kavli, 2019). The main responsibility of NIP is to provide asylum seekers, refugees, and immigrants with important qualifications necessary to transfer into employment. This programme is mandatory for people between the ages of 18 and 55. It offers a substantial allowance alongside language, civic, and job training.

There are also some organizations that help refugees and immigrants settle well in Norway including MIKS and Nysjansse located in Bergen Municipality. MIKS Ressurscenter for Integrering i Bergen (MIKS Resource Center for Integration) is an organization located in Bergen. Nysjansse in Bergen (New Chance Organization) is an organization that helps immigrants who need qualifications to get work with programs such as work experience, Norwegian training, vocational training and guidance. The International Labour Organization (ILO) also helps in this endeavour with the mandate to protect the interests of workers employed in nations other than their own; which includes refugees and immigrants. This agency of the United Nations provides conventions, policies, and recommendations that promote inclusivity, security, and fairness in the workplace setting.

Despite the efforts by NIP, MIKS, Nysjansse, ILO and other relevant organizations in Norway, Ims et al. (2021) note that most refugees and immigrants still have difficulties integrating

into the country's system. Brekke et al. (2021) add that most European countries, including Norway, have even set up restrictive measures to control the number of refugees entering their nations. For instance, Norway intensified the practice of revoking the residence permits and citizenship of migrants as a way of dealing with the influx of refugees. Such measures significantly affect the lives of the refugees and their families and reflect a broader trend of challenges refugees and immigrants face in the host nations. Moreover, it impacts their ability to get or maintain employment and provide for themselves and their families. Another related issue is that there are structural or institutional barriers that hinder access to employment opportunities or perpetuate various challenges for immigrants and refugees in Norway's labour market (Ims et al., 2021).

1.2 Problem Statement

In recent times, there has been increased attention on issues faced by refugees and immigrants in the host countries; in this case, Norway. Whereas Norway has a long-standing history of hosting refugees and immigrants from all over the world, these groups continue to face challenges in accessing essential services such as employment (Ims et al., 2021), healthcare (Schein et al., 2019; Sandvik et al., 2012), and legal status (residence permits) (Brekke et al., 2021; Moore, 2010; Vitus & Liden, 2010). While the other issues have received significant scholarly attention, there is limited research on the refugees' actual experiences relating to accessing Norway's labour market. The labour market is a crucial avenue for achieving social and economic integration as it provides individuals with a means to support themselves and their families and also offers them an opportunity to fully participate in the host society.

Considering this literature gap, the current study sought to examine the experiences of refugees and immigrants in interacting with Norway's labour market; with the aim of identifying the main barriers that hinder their access to this market. While most studies have explored general challenges faced by refugees and immigrants as is shown in the literature review chapter, this study focuses on challenges specifically about accessing labour markets. Moreover, it goes further and compares the challenges that specific refugees from different countries encounter. The study used a sample of Ukrainian, Afghan, and Somali refugees to compare their experiences with regard to interaction with Norway's labour sector. By examining the challenges faced by these refugees and immigrants, the study aims to contribute to both the fields of academia and practice with regard to improving the integration of distinct groups of immigrants and refugees (based on country of

origin) in European countries, using the case of Norway; particularly their integration into the labour market.

1.3 Research Questions and Objectives

The main aim of this research is to contribute knowledge about how refugees and immigrants interact with Norway's labour market. In this endeavour, the main research question is what challenges do Ukrainian, Afghan, and Somali refugees face in accessing the labour market in Norway? The specific questions for the study are:

- What are the challenges that Ukrainian refugees and immigrants face in accessing the labour market in Norway?
- What are the challenges that Afghan refugees and immigrants face in accessing the labour market in Norway?
- What are the challenges that Somali refugees and immigrants face in accessing the labour market in Norway?
- To what extent does Norway discriminate among refugees and immigrants in terms of access to the labour market?

From the above questions, the main research objectives of the study are:

- To identify the most common barriers that Ukrainian, Afghan, and Somali refugees and immigrants face when seeking employment in Norway
- To assess the effectiveness of current programs and practices aimed at supporting Ukrainian, Afghan, and Somali refugees and immigrants access the labour market in Norway
- To explore the experiences of refugees and immigrants from different countries of origin and with different immigration statuses and assess whether they face different levels of discrimination when seeking employment in Norway

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it provides crucial insights into the difficulties that Ukrainian, Afghan, and Somali refugees and immigrants face in Norway's labour market. This is in regard to seeking employment and performing their stipulated roles and responsibilities. For such people, the opportunity to access decent work and employment is central to ensuring their well-being, protecting their human rights, and restoring their dignity. Rudiger (2020) explains that

decent work strengthens resilience and this enables the refugees and immigrants to fulfil their economic and social rights. In accessing decent work refugees and immigrants can bring new skills, professional experience, entrepreneurship, products, and social or economic skills to the host community. Moreover, they will fill shortages in skills and labour, and lead to higher tax revenues enhancing the community as a whole through growth, diversification, and increased prosperity. This study is important as its findings on the experiences of Ukrainian, Afghan, and Somali refugees and immigrants will help realize these and many other benefits.

The findings of the study will contribute to a better understanding of the experiences of different refugees and immigrants, and help promote greater cultural understanding and social cohesion. It will provide important information on the challenges that these groups face in accessing labour markets in Norway; which represents most other countries in Europe. From this explanation, it is seen that the study is critical; especially in today's world characterized by increased numbers of refugees and immigrants moving to Europe.

Apart from the contribution to academic literature explained above, the findings of the study are also crucial in the field of labour practices, laws, and norms. This is particularly important for the conventions, recommendations, programs, and policies of relevant labour organizations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Norwegian Introduction Programme for Newly Arrived Immigrants (NIP). The standards and mandates of such organizations are aimed at ensuring productive, accessible, and sustainable work under conditions of dignity, security, equity, and freedom. The organizations aim to protect freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, the eradication of discrimination in employment, the elimination of child labour, and the eradication of compulsory or forced labour. The findings of the study can be used to develop or reform programs and policies that support the integration of refugees and immigrants into Norway's labour market. In turn, these policies and programs will help improve the social and economic well-being of the refugees and immigrants. By identifying levels and types of discrimination that exist, the study can inform reform of current policies and programs to include addressing discrimination and promoting greater equality in Norway's labour market.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

A conceptual framework helps demonstrate the theoretical and empirical foundations of the research and highlight how it fits within the broader context of related literature. It entails a set of concepts and propositions that connect the research questions and objectives. It offers a conceptual map that outlines how a researcher will approach the research problem, identify the relevant relationships and variables, and interpret the findings. For this study, the selected conceptual framework is institutional theory. According to Theonig (2012), institutional theory considers the processes by which structures such as norms, rules, routines, and schemes become established as authoritative guidelines of behaviour in a particular setting. Applied to a labour market setting, the institutional theory is seen as an approach to understanding management practices and organizations as products of social rather than economic pressures. The adoption and maintenance of practices in the sector are dependent on social pressures for legitimacy and conformity instead of technical pressures for performance (Kauppi, 2013).

Institutional theory is an appropriate theoretical framework for the current study because it provides a lens through which to understand how institutional factors influence the experiences of Ukrainian, Afghan, and Somali refugees and immigrants in Norway's labour market. The theory helps identify structural barriers and opportunities that refugees and immigrants face in accessing Norway's labour market. It is crucial in the analysis of how norms and practices in this market affect refugees. Moreover, it helps in the exploration of how institutional pressures including regulations and laws affect the ability of these refugees and immigrants to obtain and retain employment in Norway. Using the theory, the study identifies the dominant institutional logic that governs the Norwegian labour market and how they create structural barriers that influence the experiences of the refugees and immigrants interacting with this market. Additionally, institutional theory helps in the analysis of how institutions such as NIP and ILO support refugees and immigrants in accessing Norway's labour market. The study examines how these institutions shape practices and policies that affect the access of refugees and immigrants to the labour market.

1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The current study focuses on refugees and immigrants from three countries namely Ukraine, Afghanistan, and Somalia. Refugees and immigrants from other countries were not considered for the study. The search for these participants was through relevant organizations in

Bergen municipality. The main focus was to explore the respondents' lived experiences relating to their interaction with Norway's labour market. This was not limited to any particular type of work but rather any form of activity that earns one income. The study also focuses on the interaction of these individuals with relevant labour, social, and government institutions.

While this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by refugees and immigrants from Ukraine, Afghanistan, and Somalia in accessing Norway's labour market, it is crucial to acknowledge some limitations of the study. Firstly, the study will be conducted for people residing in Bergen Municipality and hence the findings may not be representative of refugees and immigrants residing in other parts of Norway. Similarly, the focus being Norway means that the findings are also not generalizable to other countries, including European or even other Nordic countries. Secondly, the study focuses on Ukrainian, Afghan, and Somali refugees and immigrants and hence findings are not generalizable to groups from other countries. The experiences of refugees and immigrants from other nations may differ because of factors such as educational backgrounds and cultural differences. Thirdly, relying on self-reported data from the sampled respondents may be subject to social desirability bias and other forms of response bias. Despite these limitations, the study will provide crucial insights into the challenges that refugees and immigrants face in accessing Norway's labour market.

Other limitations of this study concern the adopted research design, sampling, and data collection methods. Case study research design involves an in-depth investigation of a person, group, community, or event. It is selected for this study to investigate refugees and immigrants in Bergen. While it provides rich and detailed qualitative data and useful insights for further research, it also has its limitations. For one, Meyer (2003) notes that case studies are undermined by the researcher's own subjective feelings or prejudice leading to bias. It also lacks scientific rigor which provides little basis for generalization, and is difficult to replicate. A related limitation of the study stems from its use of purposive sampling which is also susceptible to errors in judgment by the researcher when selecting the respondents and also high levels of bias and low levels of reliability as the researcher tends to pick respondents that fit in a desired profile (Etikan & Babetope, 2019). The use of interviews in data collection is also time and effort-consuming and necessitates a limited sample size. The chosen data analysis method, thematic analysis, is also susceptible to subjectivity by the researcher.

1.7 Structure of the Paper

This paper is organized into six chapters. The first chapter (Introduction) sets the stage for the study by providing an overview of the research problem and its significance. The section also includes a brief background of the research topic, an outline of the research questions and objectives, and the scope of the study. The second chapter (Literature Review) analyzes and reviews existing literature related to the topic under investigation. The exploration identifies gaps in the existing literature and explains how the current study contributes to the field. The third chapter (Methodology) describes the research design, research methods, data collection, and data analysis techniques used in the study with a rationale for selecting these methods. The fourth chapter (Findings/Results) presents the findings of the study from the collected data. The fifth chapter (Discussion) presents an interpretation of the results of the study and discusses their implications. The section addresses the research questions and also presents a comparison of the findings with existing literature. The paper then ends with a Conclusion chapter which provides a summary of the main findings, their implications for the field or practice, and recommendations for future research.

2. Literature Review

This section presents a review and analysis of the existing literature related to the topic under investigation. Through the analysis, it identifies gaps in the literature and explains how the current study contributes to filling this gap.

2.1 Defining the terms related to people crossing national borders

Collyer & De Haas (2012) note that one of the most important issues in discussing the topic of migration is defining the different categories of people moving from one country to another. Most people refer to individuals who have crossed borders as migrants. However, this is just one subgroup with other categories including refugees and asylum seekers (Long, 2013). A person who has fled their home country because they fear being persecuted and subjected to severe human rights violations there is known as a refugee (Carens, 2014). These people had no alternative but to leave their nation in search of safety because their own government could not or would not defend them from those to their safety and lives. Long (2013) adds that refugees are entitled to international protection. A person who has fled their country and is looking for protection from persecution and grave human rights violations in another country, but who has not yet received official recognition as a refugee and is awaiting a judgment on their asylum claim, is said to be an asylum seeker. Asylum-seeking is a human right and everyone should be allowed to seek asylum in another country. While there is no universal definition of the term migrant, the general understanding is that a migrant is someone staying outside their country of origin but is neither a refugee nor an asylum seeker. Migrants cross borders to work, study, or live with relatives. It is important to understand the distinctions of these terms because of the misunderstandings and misconceptions relating to them.

As explained by Carens (2014), the different people in the identified categories have distinct legal statuses (access to citizenship) and levels of inclusion in the host society. In turn, this affects their participation in economic activities and hence the development of the countries involved. The moral claims to citizenship by people who have migrated to a new country as adults rest on two distinct but related principles: democratic legitimacy and social membership (Carens, 2014). According to the social membership principle, people eventually join a society and become its members. They participate in an extensive network of social groups. They develop identities

and interests connected to other society members. The state's laws and regulations influence their options and opportunities in life, as well as those of their offspring. The principle of democratic legitimacy holds that a person should take part in shaping laws by which he/she is governed (Dogan, 2022). This is achieved through voting for representatives that make the law.

While some people may acquire the status of being considered as migrants, others are not lucky. Carens (2014) explains that there are other groups of people classified as legal residents, temporary workers, irregular migrants, and refugees. Legal residents are immigrants who have been admitted to the new country but have not yet acquired citizenship. These people enjoy most rights of citizens except maybe the right to vote. Temporary workers are those admitted by a nation to work but only for a limited time. These people have different legal rights compared to migrants and legal residents. For instance, Carens (2014) adds that their participation in redistributive social programs and other sectors of the economy may be limited. Irregular migrants are people who have settled in a new country without proper authorization. Despite having different categorizations of people crossing borders, it is not always distinct and people keep shifting from one category to another. Long (2013) explains that migrant and refugee flows are usually interconnected with individuals, families, and communities shifting between different policy categories.

Apart from legal status, another important aspect related to the classification of people of immigrant origin is inclusion in host societies. Most of the people that move to new countries do not experience the full benefits offered in the new societies. From the definition above, it is seen that migrants and refugees should be able to enjoy these benefits and fully participate in the social, economic, and political lives of the country. However, this is not the case as these people can still be marginalized. Carens (2014) explains that people of immigrant origin are not truly a part of the political community if they are denied access to economic and educational opportunities that others take for granted, if their fellow citizens view them with suspicion and hostility, if their concerns are disregarded, and if their voices are not heard in political life. They might be citizens legally, but that doesn't imply they are citizens in the truest, most significant sense of the word. They are unlikely to consider themselves or be regarded by others as true community members.

The different classification of people crossing borders affects their participation in development activities. Faist (2013) explains that migrants and other groups that enjoy full benefits

get to participate in all developmental activities. Because they do not cut ties with their countries of origin, they are able to send remittances to their families back home and hence influence the development of their countries as well. These flows are a crucial source of foreign exchange and financing. Other groups including asylum seekers, irregular migrants, and refugees might not enjoy such benefits and hence would not have a significant impact on the development of both countries. One negative economic impact related to migration is that there may be a brain drain with smart people in important professions leaving developing nations with their important services. This would impact on the development of such nations.

2.2 The Concept of Refugee and Immigrant Integration

According to Hamberger (2009), the literature regarding the reception of refugees and immigrants into destination society is often characterized by contradictory positions stemming from diverse definitions. In most immigration studies, scholars use diverse definitions and concepts to express this process that embodies the reception of people moving to new countries. In concurrence with this, Alba & Nee (1997) note that scholars use various terms that differ in clarity including toleration, accommodation, adaption, or adaptation. Alba & Nee (1997) add that some terms are technically precise such as incorporation while others are too descriptive such as acculturation or assimilation. By considering studies focusing on immigrant integration, Hamberger (2009) notes that there is no satisfactory core definition of this concept and that scholars use the different identified terms to refer to this process. Moreover, literature on immigration can also be confusing as scholars sometimes use the same terms to refer to different processes that deal with the reception of refugees and immigrants (Hamberger, 2009). For instance, the terms 'assimilation' and 'integration' are used to define the same thing yet other scholars view them as different. Still, Gibney & Hansen (2005) note that generally the term 'integration' is used as an umbrella term that subordinates other dominant concepts like multiculturalism and assimilation. Mochanov (2023) concurs with this notion and explains that the term integration is understood differently based on the context and the country but is generally understood as the process of mutual adaptation between migrants/refugees and the host society, both as groups and individuals.

As explained above, the concept of integration is complex and multidimensional. Penninx (2005) notes that it has various aspects including economic, social, cultural, and political

dimensions. A major emphasis has been placed on economic integration because it is usually difficult for refugees and immigrants to find employment and other economic possibilities. According to Ogoe (2022), characteristics such as education, recognition of foreign credentials, and language skills can have a big impact on the success of economic integration. Rudiger (2020) adds that one of the most common ways of attaining integration is through offering refugees and immigrants with decent work and employment. Further aiding in the integration of refugees and immigrants into the host society is social integration, which includes access to healthcare, education, and social services.

Cultural integration, which entails learning the language, norms, values, and customs of the host nation, is also closely related to social integration. Language instruction programs, cross-cultural contact, and chances for social interaction with the local people can all help with cultural integration (Penninx, 2005). However, it can be difficult for refugees and immigrants to fully integrate into the host society since they may experience prejudice, discrimination, and social marginalization as noted by Mestheneos & Ionnidi (2002). Another aspect of integration is political integration, which includes immigrant and refugee participation in the political and civic life of the host nation. This covers having access to citizenship, exercising one's right to vote, and participating in political and civil society organizations. Political integration, according to research, can support immigrants' and refugees' feelings of community and social cohesiveness in the host society.

In his work, Boswell (2008) also explains that the concept of integration in a host society is measured through four dimensions namely cultural, political, economic, and social which are similar to the dimensions of integration given by Penninx (2005). Boswell developed these four classical dimensions of integration under the typology of migrant integration policies based on exclusion or inclusion and the concept of citizenship. He explains that for one to understand the integration policies of different nations, one needs to answer the question: how are basic democratic values combined with socioeconomic equality on one hand and religious and cultural diversity on the other? From this, Boswell (2008) provides three dimensions of citizenship which can be utilized in analyzing local and national integration practices and policies. The dimensions are socio/economic, legal/political, and cultural/religious.

- Socio/economic: described by economic and social rights; industrial rights and rights to institutionalized facilities in the socio-economic sphere. Examples include access to social security facilities such as social assistance, welfare programmes, unemployment benefits and insurance
- Legal/political: whether or not refugees and immigrants are considered full-fledged members of society. Refers to their political rights and duties; the ease of access to the formal political system and acquiring national citizenship
- Cultural/religious: do the refugees and immigrants have the right to manifest and organize themselves as religious, ethnic, or cultural groups?

From this, it is seen that integration policies and practices can be evaluated based on their exclusive and inclusive character.

Another important definition of integration is provided by The International Organization for Migration (IOM), which is a body under the United Nations System that works to ensure the humane and orderly management of migration and promotes international cooperation on migration issues. IOM considers integration as a crucial aspect of comprehensive and effective migration management to promote good relations and social inclusion across diverse groups, ultimately leading to the establishment of diverse yet cohesive and inclusive societies (IOM, 2023). The organization acknowledges that integration is highly contextual and varies across settings and hence is a multi-directional and dynamic process that entails the mutual adaptation of immigrants/refugees and host communities; founded on the principles of safeguarding fundamental rights, non-discrimination, tolerance, and respect. The multidimensional aspect covers the inclusion of migrants/refugees with regard to economic, social, psychological, civic, and navigational spheres as well as empowering host societies and other local actors to receive and interact with immigrants and refugees (Mochanov, 2023). IOM acknowledges that successful integration necessitates dialogue and mutual adaptation between these two groups and this should be founded on a common set of values. In this regard, the organization works to develop measures that support the participation of refugees and immigrants in public life and civil society (IOM, 2023).

A different perspective in understanding the concept of integration is examining its impacts or consequences for the different actors involved. Mochanov (2023) explains that successful integration is crucial for all stakeholders and not only concerning benefits accrued from migration,

but also for the well-being of the people crossing borders (refugees and immigrants), and the prosperity, social harmony, stability, and security of society in general. A comprehensive and effective approach to integration ensures that migrants and refugees engage fully in host communities in cultural, political, and socioeconomic aspects (Phillimore, 2012). The approaches work with related policies to address specific migration contexts considering characteristics of the migrants and refugees such as age, gender, duration of stay, and general societal and economic trends of the host nation. Transparent and open dialogue on the advantages and challenges of integration for actors involved helps lessen fear and misperception among the host communities.

2.3 General Challenges to Integration of Refugees and Immigrants

Many studies have explored the challenges that refugees and immigrants face when integrating into their new communities. While these challenges vary depending on specific circumstances and the host society, there are some general challenges commonly faced by refugees and immigrants:

- **Language barrier:** This is the main challenge to integration as communication difficulties hinder access to education, employment opportunities, and other basic services. A study by Storen & Wiers-Jenssen (2010) notes that learning the language of the host society is crucial for successful integration.
- **Cultural adjustment:** adjusting to new customs, culture, and social norms can be overwhelming for refugees and immigrants. According to Pumariega et al. (2005), differences in traditions, values, and ways of life can create a sense of alienation and disorientation among refugees and immigrants
- **Prejudice and discrimination:** refugees and immigrants face racism, discrimination, and prejudice because of their ethnicity, nationality, and immigration status (Carranza, 2007). Such attitudes limit their opportunities, social inclusion, and overall well-being.
- **Education and employment:** Most refugees and immigrants face difficulties accessing quality education and finding suitable employment because of factors including language proficiency, recognition of qualifications, and unfamiliarity with the job market (Fossland, 2013; Aure, 2013; Storen & Wiers-Jenssen, 2010).
- **Administrative and legal challenges:** navigating a new and complex legal system, understanding rights and responsibilities, and obtaining necessary documentation can be

difficult for refugees and immigrants (Urinboyev, 2020). Lack of information and access to legal support poses further challenges to integration efforts.

- Social support networks: Simich et al. (2005) note that building social networks and support is crucial in integration efforts. If refugees and immigrants face isolation and limited social networks, they may have extended feelings of loneliness which hinders their integration.
- Housing and housing affordability: Finding comfortable and affordable can be challenging especially in urban places where costs are high for refugees and immigrants (Carter & Osborne, 2009). Unfamiliarity with the local housing market and limited financial resources are major constraints in this endeavour.
- Trauma and mental health: Many refugees and immigrants have experienced traumatic events such as prosecution, conflict, and displacement. Dealing with such trauma while simultaneously adjusting to new environments can impact on the mental health and well-being of these people (Pumariega et al., 2005). Moreover, they are also separated from their families during crossing borders which further impacts their mental health.
- Access to healthcare: refugees and immigrants may encounter barriers to accessing healthcare services because of factors such as lack of knowledge concerning the healthcare system, language barriers, and insufficient healthcare coverage. This leads to disparities in health outcomes (Asgary & Segar, 2011).

2.4 Refugee and Immigrant Integration in Norway

Refugee and immigrant integration is a crucial topic debated in global institutions such as the International Organization of Migration (IOM), the European Union (EU), and the United Nations (UN), and dominates civic debates in host nations (Oliver & Gidley, 2015; Harder et al, 2018). Algan et al. (2010) add that the ever-increasing numbers of immigrants and refugees and the consistent discrepancies in employment rates of this group necessitate more knowledge of the effectiveness of the integration process of host nations. Different countries and contexts have different integration policies and methods, and there are debates over the best method of integrating people (Mestheneos & Ioannidi, 2002). Rodriguez-Garcia (2010) notes that while some scholars support assimilationist policies that emphasize quick assimilation into the host culture, others support multicultural approaches that value and acknowledge the cultural uniqueness of refugees and immigrants. In order to ensure inclusive and equitable integration outcomes, it is

becoming increasingly important to remove structural barriers like prejudice, inequality, and marginalization.

Norway is a leading destination for immigrants and refugees and this is partly because of its effective integration plan. The strengthened integration effort is one of the six primary areas of commitment for the Norwegian government. Low employment rates among immigrants, a skills gap, and isolation along economic, social, and cultural lines are the key problems (The Ministry of Education and Research, 2020). The plan aims to expand both the labour force and societal engagement through a coordinated and all-encompassing effort. In order to guarantee economic and social sustainability, opportunities for everyone, and a welfare society with trust, cohesiveness, and only minimal discrepancies, it is crucial to strengthen the integration effort and the strategy. The immigration policy must be taken into consideration while evaluating the integration policy. The government is working to implement a stringent, responsible, and ethical immigration policy. This gives good integration the foundation it needs. The main goal of the strategy is “Greater participation in working life and society in general”. The strategy has four priority areas namely: education and qualification, work, everyday integration, and the right to live a free life (The Ministry of Education and Research, 2020).

2.5 Relationship between Integration and Employment

Sultana (2022) explains that most discourse regarding the movement of people into new countries focuses on their integration into the new country’s labour market. Fedrigo et al. (2021) agree with this citing economic integration as of utmost importance. Their study explains that it is paid employment that enables the migrant or refugee to have access to a livelihood and this, in turn, supports other activities that facilitate inclusion in the new society. The processes and activities include learning the local language and gaining a better understanding of the local culture and having. Paid employment also allows the refugee/immigrant to access facilities that guarantee independent living including paying rent, opening a bank account, and accessing important services like education and health. All these processes and activities also improve constructive interactions with people from the host country. Sultana (2022) also notes that self-sufficiency and economic independence are viewed positively by people in Global North countries. Therefore, helping refugees and immigrants get work is seen as a crucial aspect of integration.

To extend on the relationship between integration and employment, Mochanov (2023) notes that integration policy intersects with various other major policy areas including employment and labour market policy. He adds that effective integration policies cannot be implemented in isolation but rather should involve coherence with the employment or labour policy for the immigrants and refugees to enjoy benefits in their new environment. Despite the obvious link between employment and integration, Ims et al. (2021) explain that it is still difficult to secure decent work for migrants and refugees in most countries. There are numerous obstacles faced by these groups including lack of mastery of the local language (inability to use proper accent hence evoking prejudice and stereotypes) (Van Esbroeck, 2008); culture shock (usually entails feelings of anxiety, confusion, powerlessness, and shock that comes with interacting with a new culture (Sultana, 2022); lack of social capital, networks, and knowledge that helps one secure employment (Chung et al., 2011); and lack of appropriate skills. Hartung & Blustein (2002) explain that to help migrants and refugees access employment, they should be offered comprehensive career guidance.

Sultana (2022) remarks that there should be more emphasis on the inter-related nature of services targeting the needs of immigrants and refugees moving to new countries. Employment is seen as of fundamental importance to these people's lives because career development is intrinsically linked to other aspects of their social and personal lives. For instance, a study by Konle-Seidl & Bolits (2016) highlights that language training is associated with apprenticeships, internships, and work experience. For this reason, most career guidance approaches are based on the notion that access to work facilitates other transitions that immigrants and refugees go through when they move to new countries. Hence, these interrelated issues should not be considered separately. Any career guidance program should be conceived in broad terms and should cover issues relating to cultural competence, self-identity, and the rights and duties of individuals.

In a similar study, Magnano et al. (2021) explain that the close link between different aspects of moving and integrating into a new country is closely associated with self-identity. Immigrants and refugees usually lose their sense of self when moving to new communities and it is only through getting work and becoming self-sufficient will these people gain a positive sense of selfhood. Van Esbroeck (2008) adds that a crippled vocational self-concept might have a shattering impact on the total self-concept system of immigrants and refugees, and this, in turn, affects their efforts to establish a career self-identity in the new society. Fedrigo et al. (2021) use

the capability theory to explain how people moving to new countries can develop a sense of self through searching for livelihood also noting that employment helps people create a self-identity and flourish in the new environment.

2.6 The Case for decent work and Employment for Refugees, immigrants, and their host communities

In recent times, humanitarian aid has focused on alleviating suffering alongside ensuring development and peacebuilding aspects are considered (Howe, 2019). This entails making sure that the people receiving aid become more self-reliant and useful members of the communities they reside in. Rudiger (2020) quotes the findings of a comprehensive review carried out by the ILO, UNDP, and World Bank which determined that lack of decent work and employment is mainly caused by a lack of economic opportunity and lack of contact between different social groups (refugees, immigrants, and the host community). As such, one way of ensuring better socio-economic lives for people who have crossed borders is by guaranteeing them employment and decent work. While this mainly covers refugees and asylum seekers, it can be extended to include immigrants as well. For refugees, the opportunity to get decent employment is fundamental to their well-being and protection as it helps restore their dignity and life purpose. Being able to get decent work and maintain or enhance their skills averts the need for prolonged aid dependence. Decent work enhances resilience and assists them to attain social justice. Decent employment for immigrants or refugees and host communities complement the triple nexus humanitarian protection agenda on development, peace, and humanitarian aid (Howe, 2019). Decent employment is a crucial tool for transforming the humanitarian-development-peace nexus into tangible action.

In their study, Wauters & Lambrecht (2008) explain that in accessing decent work and employment, refugees and immigrants can bring new skills, professional experience, entrepreneurship, and social services to their host societies. The refugees and immigrants fill skills and labour shortages or gaps in local markets. Rudiger (2020) concurs with this assertion and adds that they also bring increased tax revenues and benefit both themselves and the host communities through diversification, growth, and enhanced prosperity. Small and middle enterprises started by refugees and immigrants create employment opportunities for locals and other refugees and immigrants. Moreover, legal access to employment and entrepreneurship activities enhances the

safety and stability of the people in their new communities. It also reduces the need to depend on welfare aid provided by the governments of the host communities and other humanitarian organizations. In turn, this reduces the risk of the refugees and immigrants resorting to negative coping strategies such as child labour, sex work, and exploitation in employment (van de Glind, 2010). In another study, Doidge et al. (2020) determined that refugees and immigrants getting decent work increases interaction between them and host communities which helps foster a climate of trust and peaceful coexistence.

In a related finding, Milner & Loescher (2011) noted that access to decent work and employment extends beyond benefiting the host nation with evidence showing it promotes voluntary repatriation. This is the preferred solution for most host nations dealing with a huge influx of refugees and asylum seekers. This mainly applies to refugees who were forced to flee their countries. Decent work in host nations imparts them with skills, resources, and networks that make the process of reintegration easier. Refugees and immigrants with decent employment also help their families back in their countries of origin through remittances (Batnitzky et al., 2012). They can earn enough money and send some back to their countries of origin. Used appropriately, remittances help the families back at home enhance their standards of living as well. Substantial remittances help boost the economy of that country if channelled into income and employment-generating activities.

2.7 Labour market regulation in Norway

Norway is a parliamentary democracy founded on an egalitarian system whose government has been dominated by the social democratic party for decades. The country's economy is open with a high percentage of imports and exports. Most of the labour force in Norway is unionized with unions categorized based on occupation. While the fundamental principle to organize is entrenched in Norway's constitution, the country has no legislation relating to how individual members relate with their unions (Baubock, 2007). Employees in Norway are mostly organized in national federations affiliated with three confederations: the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions, the Confederation of Vocational Unions, and the Confederation of Norwegian Professional Associations (Evju & Holo, 2017). Individual employees usually belong to the identified federations through local branch unions. On the side of employers, the main body is the

Confederation of Norwegian Business and Industry with other small organizations in industries such as shipping, agriculture, insurance, banking, and commerce (Evju & Holo, 2017).

According to Friberg et al. (2014), the free movement of people has led to labour market institutions constituting the main framework and opportunity structure that faces mobile employees and their employers. In most European nations, labour markets have significant legal regulations such as minimum wages. However, this is not the case in Nordic nations such as Norway where wages are established by collective agreements between organizations of employers and employee unions (Friberg et al., 2014). Dolvik & Cramme (2011) add that the primary characteristics of the Nordic model include extensive worker representation, high union density, and centralized agreements. Moreover, Nordic countries have a close interaction between macroeconomic policies, the welfare state, and work-life policies. Friberg et al. (2014) add that unionization in Norway remains high compared to other European countries even though the industries where refugees and immigrants find employment have much lower unionization rates.

Norway, just like the other Nordic countries, does not have a statutory minimum wage. Rather, the social partners have the responsibility to regulate wages with the dominant view explaining that statutory minimum wages contradict the sovereignty of collective bargaining (Eldring & Alsos, 2012). In principle, agreements are binding only on the signatories and on non-unionized workers in organizations subject to the agreements. In Norway, particularly, all collective agreements are considered to be generally binding since 1993. However, it is only in the year 2004 that this was enacted triggered by the massive inflow of workers from new member states of the European Union (EU) which uncovered weaknesses present in the regulatory system. Alsos & Eldring (2008) explain that at the time most of the labour market sectors experienced low-wage competition. Parties that enter a collective agreement are mandated to keep the peace and the Labour Disputes Act 1927 gives the court authority to pronounce judgment related to a breach of this responsibility (Evju & Holo, 2017). This Act also outlines a definition of collective agreements including individuals and organizations allowed to enter into such agreements. On the side of employees, a collective agreement is entered into by a trade union and is binding on the individual members, the organization, and its subsidiaries. On the side of employers, an agreement can be entered by individual employers or organizations that the employer is affiliated with.

2.8 Organizations and programmes involved in employment matters of refugees and immigrants in Norway

The programme mandated with helping immigrants and refugees get employment in Norway is the Norwegian Introduction Programme for Newly Arrived Immigrants (NIP). Its objective is to transform newly arrived immigrants and refugees into productive members of Norwegian society by securing employment. It also works with asylum seekers, and unaccompanied minors, providing all these groups with the necessary qualifications to transfer into employment. The main aim of the programme is to ensure rapid and safe transfer into employment and is mandatory for people aged between 18 and 55 years (Ims et al., 2021). NIP provides civic knowledge and language training, and job-training and a comparatively substantial allowance. This is crucial in helping refugees and immigrants in Norway get employment.

There are also some organizations that help refugees and immigrants settle well in Norway including MIKS and Nysjansse located in Bergen Municipality. MIKS Ressurssenter for Integreting i Bergen (MIKS Resource Center for Integration) is an organization located in Bergen. Nysjansse in Bergen (New Chance Organization) is an organization that helps immigrants who need qualifications to get work with programs such as work experience, Norwegian training, vocational training and guidance.

In most areas of the world, including Norway, the International Labour Organization (ILO) is involved in helping refugees and immigrants get decent work and employment in host countries. ILO is a United Nations agency mandated with advancing social and economic justice through setting international labour standards. The main mandate of ILO is to protect the interests of workers employed in nations other than their own and hence its policies, conventions, and programs directly relate to the research questions and objectives of the current research. Therefore the study is underpinned by the frameworks, policies, and programs adopted by ILO.

According to Rudiger (2020), the opportunity to access decent work is crucial in ensuring the protection of human rights and is closely linked and inherent to human dignity. Decent work is defined as work that is productive and guarantees security in the workplace, fair income, and social protection for families. Decent work allows refugees and immigrants to achieve resilience and self-reliance. The right to work with regards to people working in different countries is protected by numerous regional and international laws such as the 1951 Convention on the Status

of Refugees and international law standards, particularly those enacted by the ILO. In principle, ILO recommendations and conventions apply to refugees in areas such as Occupational Safety and Health (OSH), Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (FPRW), social protection, and social security. Moreover, there are two ILO conventions specific to migrant workers namely the Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143) and the Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97) (Vittin-Balima, 2002). These conventions protect migrant workers and at the same time provide a framework that can be used to address the plight of refugees and asylum seekers seeking to enter the labour markets of their host nations.

2.9 Literature Gap

The chapter has highlighted how substantial pieces of literature have examined the concept of integration of refugees and immigrants and how it relates to the employment of these groups of people. Findings of such studies indicate that involving refugees and immigrants in the labour sector has numerous advantages bringing new skills, professional experience, entrepreneurship, and social services to their host societies. From this, the host society experiences prosperity, social harmony, stability, and security in general. The review has also highlighted that there are some challenges to integration experienced by refugees and immigrants in most countries. The current study focuses on the Norwegian labour sector. While some of the challenges may be common, the study provides more insight into this particular country. The study goes a step further by focusing on comparing challenges that refugees and immigrants from different countries experience. No literature reviewed has compared the experiences of refugees/immigrants from the selected countries and this is a gap that the current study aims to fill. Focusing on Afghanistan (Middle East), Somalia (Eastern Africa), and Ukraine (Eastern Europe) contributes new information to the discourse. Findings will substantiate whether or not refugees and immigrants from different countries face the same challenges in accessing labour markets in Europe; in this case Bergem Municipality in Norway.

3. Methodology

This section describes the specific steps taken to address the research questions. It presents the research design, research methods, data collection, and data analysis techniques used in the study with a rationale for selecting these methods.

3.1 Research Methodology

3.1.1 Research Philosophy

The current study adopted an interpretivism research philosophy which contends that understanding a phenomenon is achieved through subjective interpretation. The interpretivist philosophy recommends studying a phenomenon in its natural environment. This research philosophy is suitable for studying the experiences of refugees and immigrants' interaction with Norway's labour market. Interpretivism emphasizes that a person perceives and understands social reality and his/her ideological position affects this. Therefore, it is understood that knowledge is personally experienced. By holding dialogues with refugees and immigrants concerning their experiences with work and employment, the researcher is able to gain a deeper understanding of this topic.

3.1.2 Research Approach

The current study used the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) methodology. Smith et al. (2021) note that this research approach aims to examine how individuals make sense of important experiences in their lives. From this description, it is clear that IPA was a suitable approach for this research. IPA has three main underpinnings namely phenomenology, ideography, and hermeneutics (Stambaugh et al., 2010). Phenomenology aims to describe an individual's experiences in life and link them directly to their specific context. Ideography is concerned with ensuring that every case is given the necessary attention and detailed analysis. Hermeneutic phenomenology focuses on interpretively exploring existential dimensions of exemplified rationality.

The IPA methodological approach provides interactive layers of interpretation and considers in-depth analysis ensuring that major topics are selected instead of common topics. IPA acknowledges that it is hard to talk about crucial experiences and its insightful interpretation

recognizes this quandary in the careful analysis of the experiences of respondents (Ims et al., 2021). The interpretations conducted were derived from the responses given by the interviewees as well as the analysis of the researcher. In this manner, it is seen that the IPA approach is qualitative in nature. Analyzing qualitative data required critical self-awareness by the researcher to ensure dependability and trustworthiness are achieved. A phenomenological and reflexive attitude was adopted because it helps avoid bias arising from prior assumptions.

3.1.3 Research Strategy and Design

A research methodology offers a strategy used to plot out a systemic process to understand a phenomenon. The strategy adopted for this research is case study design which is used in investigating a phenomenon in its natural setting. This study entails an in-depth empirical investigation of the refugees and immigrants residing in Bergen Municipality. Yin (2014) explains that whereas there are several forms of social science research methodologies, case study research is preferred when the main research questions are “how” or “why”; when the researcher has little or no control over behavioural events; and when the focus of the investigation is on a contemporary phenomenon. The current study aims to investigate how refugees and immigrants interact with Norway’s labour market and issues that stem from this interaction (why they face challenges) which makes a case study an appropriate research methodology. A case study is also most suitable when the researcher has little or no control over the events under investigation. In the chosen study, I have no control over labour practices in Bergen and hence could only study what is happening. Moreover, case studies are used to study contemporary phenomena and not historical ones. This study focuses on current practices and happenings in Norway’s labour system with regards to refugees and immigrants underscoring the suitability of a case study approach. Gerring (2007) adds that a well-constructed case study will allow the researcher to use causality to locate the intermediate factors lying between some structural cause and its purported effect. In keeping with this, the investigation in this study will show the challenges experienced by immigrants and refugees in accessing Norway’s labour market and the underlying causes of these challenges.

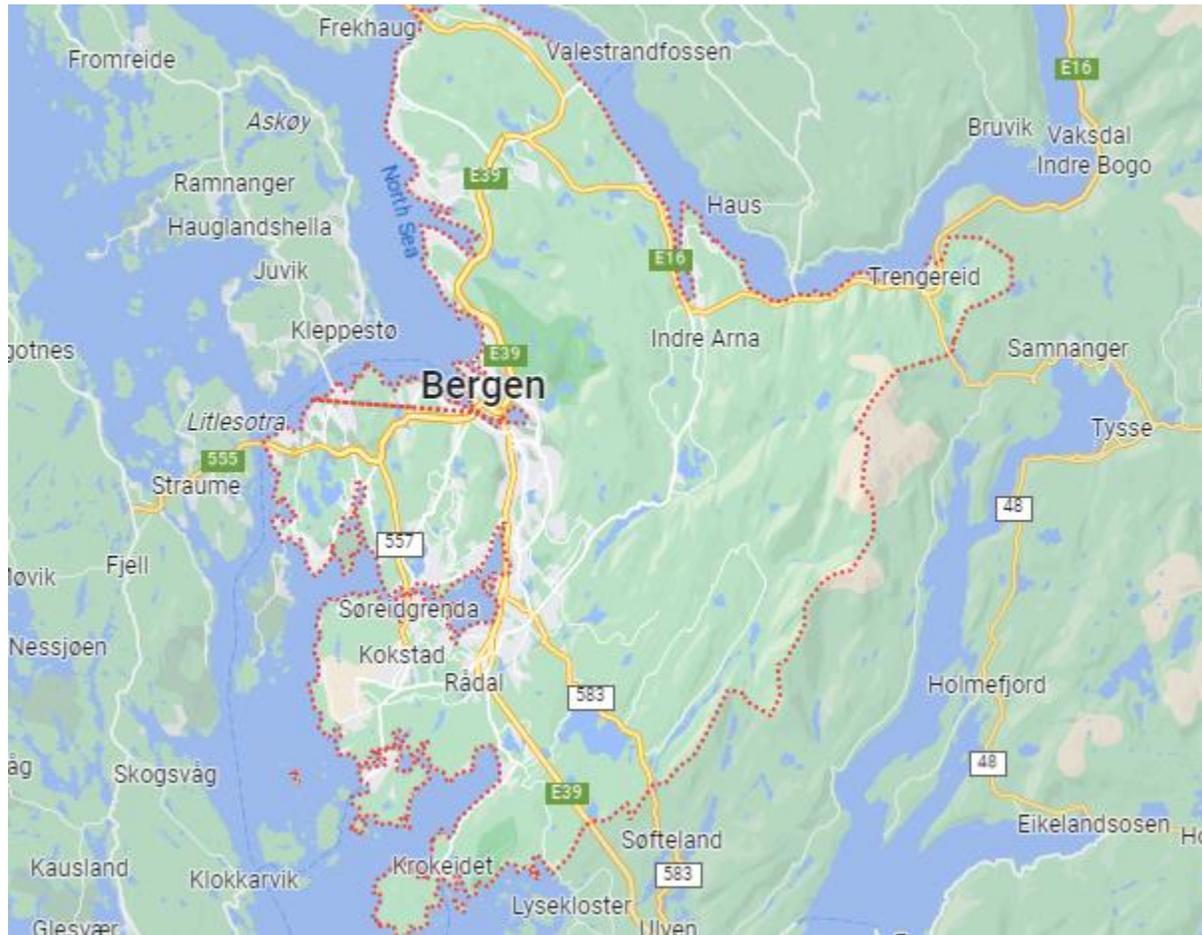
3.2 Selection of Participants

3.2.1 Target area

The aim of this study was to investigate the experiences of immigrants and refugees in relation to accessing Norway's labour market. As explained in the first chapter, the study focused on immigrants and refugees residing in Bergen Municipality. Bergen is a city and municipality located in Vestland County which is found in the western side of the country. It is nestled between mountains and the coastline. The municipality covers an area of 180 square miles (465 sq km) and is on the peninsula of Bergenshalvøyen. Bergen is the administrative centre of Vestland County and is the second-largest city in the country with a population of about 289,330 people as of the year 2022 (City Population, 2023). It consists of eight boroughs namely Åsane, Ytrebygda, Årstad, Fyllingsdalen, Laksevåg, Bergenhus, Fana, and Arna.

The public sector is a major employer in Bergen municipality. However, gaining employment in this sector requires one to have an excellent command of the Norwegian language. Other significant employers in Bergen include the maritime and media industries. The Port of Bergen is the most important maritime hub on the west coast of Norway and is a fancied cruise destination for people of Northern Europe. The University of Bergen and associated research institutes are also significant employers. Many foreign researchers and students find jobs here. Figure 1 below shows a map of Bergen Municipality.

Figure 1: Map of Bergen Municipality



Source: Google Maps (2023)

3.2.2 Sampling procedures

Sampling is defined as a process in research whereby a predetermined number of observations (a sample) are taken from a larger group (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). In order for a researcher to draw valid conclusions from a study, they need to carefully decide on how to select respondents or participants that are representative of the population under investigation. The method used to perform sampling from a given population is determined by the type of analysis to be performed in the study. Generally, there are two main types of sampling namely probability and non-probability sampling. While probability sampling entails the random selection of participants, non-probability entails non-random selection based on convenience and other criteria (Kandola et al., 2014).

The current research used the non-probability sampling method and particularly the purposive sampling technique. Tongco (2017) explains that purposive sampling, also known as judgment sampling, involves the researcher actively seeking participants that are most useful and suitable for answering the questions and objectives of the study. This type of sampling is usually employed in qualitative studies where the researcher wants to get in-depth knowledge about a particular phenomenon and group. An effective purposive sampling should have clear criteria and rationale for inclusion. In this case, the study focuses on refugees and immigrants in Norway. Moreover, the participants chosen originated from Ukraine, Afghanistan, and Somalia. The prospective research participants were acquired from various organizations that work with refugees. The three main organizations that were contacted are:

- Norwegian Introduction Programme (NIP): Introduction Centre for refugees Bergen Municipality (Introduksjonsenteret for flyktninger Bergen kommune).
- MIKS Ressurssenter for Integrering I Bergen: MIKS Resource Center for Integration is an organization located in Bergen.
- Nysjans in Bergen (New Chance Organization): This is an organization that helps immigrants who need qualifications to get work with programs such as work experience, Norwegian training, vocational training and guidance.
- Being a resident of Bergen, I also recruited some participants who I have interacted with in the past without going through the aforementioned organizations.

3.2.3 Sample selected

In collecting the sample, I identified Ukrainian, Afghan, and Somali immigrants and refugees from the listed organizations. Eligible individuals were contacted by asking them about their willingness to take part in the study. The potential participants were given information about the study on several occasions through emails and phone calls/messages. Those willing to participate in the study were provided with a consent form to sign. With purposive sampling, I was able to get 5 respondents from each country. Some potential participants retracted the initial consent and had to be replaced by other people. Similarly, two did not reply to numerous attempts to schedule interviews and also had to be replaced. Other inclusion criteria that I considered included: the potential respondent should be an adult; and should have resided in Norway for a period, not below six months; and the respondent should have interacted with the labour market in

the form of employment either in the past or present. Moreover, I strived to have at least one respondent for each gender for all the countries under investigation.

Presentation of participants

Table 1: Participants from Afghanistan

Participants	Time in Norway	Age	Gender	Family Status	Education	Employment Status
1	2 years	23 years	Male	Unmarried	Adult education at Bergen Voxy	Student + job
2	6 years	40 years	Female	Married, 2 children	Masters, Afghanistan	Unemployed
3	8 years	46 years	Male	Married, 3 children	Degree, Afghanistan	Employed
4	3 years	26 years	Male	Unmarried	High school level, Afghanistan	Enrolled in Nysjanse + practice
5	1 year	28 years	Female	Unmarried	Diploma, Afghanistan	Unemployed

Table 2: Participants from Somalia

Participants	Time in Norway	Age	Gender	Family Status	Education	Employment Status
6	10 years	43 years	Female	Married, 4 children	Diploma, Somalia	Unemployed
7	7 years	36 years	Female	Married, 3 children	Primary level, Somalia	Employed
8	1 year	27 years	Male	Unmarried	Primary level, Somalia	Enrolled in Nysjanse + practice

9	3 years	25 years	Female	Married, 1 child	High school, Norway	Unemployed
10	4 years	38 years	Male	Married, 4 children	Degree, Somalia	Employed

Table 3: Participants from Ukraine

Participant s	Time in Norway	Age	Gender	Family Status	Education	Employment Status
11	1 year, 1 month	32 years	Male	Unmarried	Certificate, Ukraine	Enrolled in NIP+ practice
12	1 year	47 years	Male	Married, 1 child	Diploma, Ukraine	Enrolled in MIKS + practice
13	1 year	43 years	Female	Married, 1 child	Degree, Ukraine	Enrolled in MIKS+ practice
14	4 years	34 years	Female	Unmarried	Masters, Norway	Employed
15	11 months	52 years	Male	Unmarried	Degree, Ukraine	Unemployed

3.3 Instrumentation

Lunenburg & Irby (2008) note that one of the most common instrumentation techniques in qualitative research is open-ended interviews whereby questions asked to respondents do not have provided choices. The instrument employed in this study was semi-structured interviews. Corbin & Morse (2013) describe interviews as a method of data collection involving two or more individuals exchanging information via a series of queries and responses. A researcher designs interview questions with the aim of eliciting certain information from the respondents. A semi-structured interview involves asking queries within a pre-determined thematic framework. The use of this method is necessary when the researcher wants to collect open-ended, qualitative data as well as some demographic questions with pre-determined responses.

Interviews are crucial in collecting information about complex topics that require lengthy information, and this is derived through dialogue between two people. The use of semi-structured interviews allowed respondents to share their interactions with the labour system in a free and elaborate manner. Galletta (2013) adds that semi-structured interviews are crucial if a researcher wants to explore the feelings or thoughts of people concerning a certain phenomenon or to delve deeply into personal or sensitive topics. In this case, the interview had questions relating to work experience as well as the current and future situation of the interviewees in relation to integration, life in general, and employment in Norway. The demographic questions entailed aspects such as age, gender, and marital status of the interviewees. Appendix 1 presents the complete interview guide used in the study.

3.4 Data Collection

The first step in data collection involved contacting the fifteen selected participants and providing them with an informed consent form to sign. The form was sent to the respondents via mail while others were hand-delivered to other respondents after setting up meetings through phone conversations. Letters containing information about the purpose and importance of the study were also sent to the respondents throughout this time. After receiving signed consent forms from the respondents, I then contacted each individual and set up a time for in-person interviews. Most of the respondents agreed to have face-to-face sessions for the interviews while three interviews had to be conducted through the phone. The most opportune location used was at the institutions through which the respondents were contacted; MIKS Ressurssenter for Integrering and Nysjansse Organization. Two respondents (a couple) asked me to visit them at their homes as that was conducive for them. The interviews lasted between 20 minutes and 1 hour. The interviews with the Afghan and Somali respondents were conducted in English and Norwegian but some of the Ukrainian respondents required translation as they did not understand either language. Luckily, there were two Ukrainian respondents who were well-versed in English and helped in translating for those who did not understand. The participants were asked to speak freely about their experiences and this helped generate spontaneous questions and answers during the conversations. I recorded the interviews for later transcription as a way of ensuring no useful information was lost. This also helped with double-checking during the data analysis part.

3.5 Data Analysis

This study employed thematic analysis, described as a method of analyzing data whereby the researcher examines data with the aim of identifying common themes, patterns, topics, or ideas (Joffe, 2012). This is closely related to the IPA approach discussed in section 3.1.2 above. This systematic analysis is used to extract categorical meaning via explicit examination of data as suggested by Smith et al. (2009).

- First step: This step involved reading the transcribed data severally to gain a deeper familiarity with the information provided by the respondents.
- Second step: The second step involved textual analysis and specifically noting and annotation of comments on the text. The notes included remarks about feelings and non-verbal communication noted during the interviews
- Third step: This step involved developing emergent themes by grouping comments. There is also a comparison of emerging connections and patterns through a critical examination of the transcribed data. Here, I combined the original script with interpretations from the analysis. Comparing and contrasting emergent themes required careful engagement with the transcript and the notes I took to ensure the important themes are captured
- Fourth step: In this step, I searched for a connection between emergent themes with the aim of discovering connections that were not exposed in the previous step. I then listed the different themes and clustering related ones. From this, new lists were derived and re-evaluated as emergent themes. This step was repeated until the themes appeared clear and covered the findings in a meaningful way.
- Fifth step: This step involved repeating the entire analytical steps listed above for each interview; while acknowledging the undeniable emerging preconceptions
- Sixth step: The last step which involved looking for patterns across cases. I looked at individual cases noting the connections and interrelationships as well as inconsistencies. I repeated this step to ensure reliable connections are made before settling on the final themes.

For the current research, thematic analysis was used to understand the wider context of refugee and immigrant integration in Norway and how this influences their interaction with the labour sector.

3.6 Research Ethics

Sanjari et al. (2014) explain that researchers usually face ethical challenges in all stages of conducting a study. For the case of qualitative research, the present study included, the interaction between the researcher and the participants leads to potential ethical issues. Therefore, it is important for the researcher to have guidelines for conduct. For this study, I had to obtain permission from the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) to conduct data collection with respondents. This is a resource centre that helps researchers and students in Norway with issues relating to data gathering, and data analysis, as well as issues of privacy, methodology, and research ethics. The main objective of NSD is to enhance possibilities and working conditions for empirical research that mainly depends on access to data.

For a qualitative study where the main aim is to learn about issues experienced by a specific group of people, ethics in the data collection process is most crucial. For this study, I used research ethics guidelines given by the Norwegian National Committee for Research Ethics in Social Sciences and Humanities (NESH). The organization defines research ethics as a core set of scientific norms, developed over time and institutionalized in the international research community. According to NESH (2022), research is a search for truth and which entails a commitment to honesty, integrity, and truth as preconditions for reliability and quality. Moreover, research is also based on methodological norms like transparency, accuracy, accountability, and factuality. These norms dictate that scientific methods should be used responsibly. Research is also guided by institutional norms which ensure research is collective, open, critical, and independent. Research ethics also encompasses common norms got from the general expectations and demands of society. For instance, human dignity is a core value for research and it consists of principles such as respect for equality, autonomy and freedom, beneficence and protection from harm, and justice in procedures (NESH, 2022). This is particularly important for this qualitative study as it involves human participants.

The first ethical consideration was informing potential respondents details of the study. It is good practice that the researcher introduces him/herself, their organization, the aim of the study, and how its findings will be used. After being given this information, the participants were asked about their willingness to take part in the study. This is referred to as informed consent, whereby participants are asked to give their approval of taking part in the study. NESH (2022) adds that

consent to participate should be voluntary and free from external pressure or restriction on freedom of choice. Because all participants involved in this study were adults, informed consent was obtained through signed documents issued to those who accepted to take part as respondents. I also informed the identified people that their participation is voluntary and they were free to leave the study if they felt uncomfortable.

Another ethical consideration with regard to data collection entails confidentiality and anonymity. For respondents to provide accurate information, they need to be assured that their respondents cannot be traced to them leading to any potential harm. To ensure this, I used pseudonyms instead of real names when referring to the respondents in drafting the research. Anonymization entails the researcher ensuring that there is no connection between the respondents and the information and that the information cannot be traced back to a specific respondent. To ensure confidentiality, all data with personal information collected during the study was stored in locked cabinets and a password-protected laptop so as to restrict access by unauthorized persons. Lastly, I also observed good citation practice by acknowledging the work of others. This study builds on works done by other researchers and hence it was crucial to provide accurate references for the sources used.

3.7 Summary

This chapter restated the purpose of the study with the aim of showing the process of answering the research questions. The chapter explains how the study used participants obtained from purposive sampling in Bergen Municipality, Norway. Moreover, the instrumentation is described whereby the qualitative methodology of semi-structured interviews is employed. The data collection and data analysis procedures I adopted are also discussed. Finally, the chapter also presents the ethical considerations I observed in conducting the study. Results got from the data analysis procedure are presented in the next chapter.

4. Results/Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the study from the collected data.

4.1 Overview of Respondents

The participants are refugees and immigrants from three different countries: Afghanistan, Somalia, and Ukraine. The sample has 5 participants from each country: Afghanistan (3 males, 2 females); Somalia (2 males, 3 females); and Ukraine (3 males, 2 females). This represents a total of 8 males and 7 females translating to 53.3% and 46.7 % respectively. In terms of age, the sample is made up of adults ranging from the age of 23 to 52 years. 8 of the respondents were married while 7 of them were not married.

4.2 Presentation of the emergent themes

This section discusses the themes that were derived from the analysis of the data collected.

Please note that the columns of the different nationalities only show percentages of sub-samples (n=5); while the last column shows percentages of the total sample (N=15). This is an important method of representation as it enables comparison of the three subsamples; which is the main purpose of this study.

4.2.1 Language Proficiency

Table 4 below shows that most of the respondents are not fluent in Norwegian 33.3%. Overall, this lack of understanding of the Norwegian language by refugees and immigrants can explain why these people face challenges in accessing Norway's labour market. There is a skew toward Ukrainians majority of whom do not understand Norwegian. This can be attributed to the fact that most of them have recently migrated to Norway with an average duration of stay being 1 year. The 1 Ukrainian with a good understanding of the language studied his post-graduate education in Norway and has been living in the country for over 4 years. On the other hand, Afghans and Somalis have a better understanding of the Norwegian language because of their comparatively longer stays in the country. The duration of stay for these groups as highlighted in Tables 1, 2, and 3 are longer compared to Ukrainians. Most of the respondents reported undertaking training in the Norwegian language from Nysjanse and MIKS organizations. 3

Ukrainians are enrolled in MIKS whose mandate is to help refugees and immigrants integrate into the Bergen society. One of the activities involved is teaching them the Norwegian language.

Respondent 12 (47-year-old Ukrainian male): *“After fleeing from the war, we made our way to Norway. After being accommodated in Norway, we were informed about MIKS which is an organization that would help us settle in our new environment. This is an organization that took most of us fleeing from the war in Ukraine. One of the main activities carried out by this organization is teaching us Norwegian and preparing us for the various jobs that we could handle in Norway. We also learnt about the rules and regulations of the labour market in Norway. This has been crucial in helping us interact with the native people and work.”*

Respondent 11 (32-year-old male from Ukraine): *“I am enrolled in the introduction programme where we are taught about the Norwegian culture and language. We are also provided with financial assistance which is crucial in helping us settle in the Norwegian society.”*

Similarly, 1 Somali and 1 Afghan are enrolled in Nysjanse which serves a similar purpose of training refugees and immigrants in the Norwegian language. From the selection of participants, I gathered that most of the Ukrainians were enrolled at MIKS while Nysjanse served Afghans and Somalis.

Table 4: Current level of Norwegian language proficiency (%)

Level of proficiency	Afghans (n=5)	Somalis (n=5)	Ukrainians (n=5)	Total (N=15)
No Norwegian	20.0 %	20.0 %	60.0 %	33.3 %
Basic	60.0 %	40.0 %	20.0 %	40.0 %
Very good	20.0 %	40.0 %	20.0 %	26.7 %

4.2.2 Education Status

Table 5: Education Status (%)

Type of education	Afghans (n=5)	Somalis (n=5)	Ukrainians (n=5)	Total (N=15)
Foreign	80.0 %	80.0 %	80.0 %	80.0 %
Norwegian	20.0 %	20.0 %	20.0 %	20.0 %

Most of the respondents have received some form of education as highlighted in Tables 1, 2, and 3. Table 5 above shows that most of the education undertaken by the respondents was from their countries of origin; 73.3%. Only 26.7% of the total sample have had some education in Norway. Respondent 14, a Ukrainian female, obtained her Master’s degree in Norway where she has lived for four years. Respondents from Afghanistan and Ukraine are highly educated in comparison to those from Somalia. Another important finding highlighted in Table 5 is that most refugees and immigrants undertake their studies in their countries of origin. For this sample, 80% of the respondents have studied in their home countries compared to only 20% who have studied in Norway. This has a direct link to the challenges that these groups face in accessing labour markets in their host nations.

4.2.3 Employment Status

Table 6: Employment Status (%)

	Afghans (n=5)	Somalis (n=5)	Ukrainians (n=5)	Total (N=15)
Employed	60.0 %	60.0 %	80.0 %	66.7 %
Unemployed	40.0 %	40.0 %	20.0 %	33.3 %

About 33.3% of the respondents are not employed compared to 66.7% who are employed. This shows that Norway has a relatively high employment rate for refugees and immigrants compared to other European nations. This finding is in line with that of the study by Ims et al. (2020), which determined that Norway is an opportune destination for people crossing borders as its integration policy increases their chances of getting decent work. The interviews also noted how humanitarian organizations were crucial in helping refugees and immigrants get employment.

Respondent 8 (27-year-old Somalian): *“When I came to Norway, I had no job. The social welfare organization, NAV advised me to enrol with the Nysjansje organization to try my luck with finding employment. Here, I met so many refugees from Arab-speaking nations. The organization offered us job training and then helped us secure work in some affiliated organizations. It has really helped a lot of us (Somalians) secure employment here in Norway”*

Respondent 11 (32-year-old Ukrainian male): *“Most of us Ukrainians who are under collective protection are enrolled in MIKS which has helped us land jobs in different sectors here in Bergen.”*

Table 6 above shows that Ukrainians have a comparatively lower difficulty with finding employment. Indeed, the 1 Ukrainian respondent who is not employed is not because of difficulty but rather because he chose not to work for someone.

Respondent 15 (52-year-old male from Ukraine): *“I have been self-employed for most of my adult life. Once I, finished my studies I started my small firm back home and it was doing well until the conflict with Russia. I am used to being a leader and my own boss and hence do not want to work. I have some money saved and I believe I will be going back to Ukraine soon to continue with my life. But at the moment I have just decided to learn about the regulations of the Norwegian market regarding self-employed people”*

4.2.4 Work by Qualification

Table 7: Appropriateness of work (%)

	Afghans (n=5)	Somalis (n=5)	Ukrainians (n=5)	Total (N=15)
Appropriate	40.0 %	0.0 %	20.0 %	20.0 %
Above qualification	0.0 %	40.0 %	0.0 %	13.3 %
Below qualification	20.0 %	20.0 %	60.0 %	33.3 %

No reply (unemployed)	40.0%	40.0 %	20.0 %	33.3 %
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As noted in Table 7 above, most Ukrainians reported that they worked below their qualification level compared to both Afghans and Somalis. Nonetheless, the figures show that this is a challenge for all the groups with other respondents excluded because they are unemployed. This highlights that immigrants and refugees face challenges in securing decent employment. Looking at the figures, more than half of the employees, 66.7% report having a job that is below their qualification level or having no job at all. Fossland (2013) had similar findings in their study on immigrants and refugees working as healthcare workers in Norway. In that study, Fossland determined that most immigrants who worked as doctors and nurses in their countries of origin had difficulties getting employment in the same positions. Similarly, Respondent 3 has a degree in nursing from Afghanistan but is only working as an assistant caregiver taking care of the elderly in their homes. Other comments made by the respondents illustrate this issue of refugees and immigrants getting work that is below their qualifications:

Respondent 3 (46-year-old male from Afghanistan): *“I studied nursing starting from a diploma level back in Afghanistan. I then joined university and acquired a Bachelor’s degree in the same. I worked for several years at a level 4 hospital before getting the opportunity to come to Norway. I saw this as a step forward. Going to a developed nation is a dream for most people in nations like ours (developing countries). I was a little surprised at taking a step backwards in terms of my career. However, I understand that I have a foreign education and that it is difficult to get recognition as a nurse practitioner. I still work as an assistant caregiver and hope to one day get to work as a practising nurse.”*

Respondent 10 (38-year-old male from Somalia): *“I have always been a bright person in terms of education. I passed well in my lower and high school education and joined the campus in the capital city, Mogadishu. I obtained a degree in community development. When I came to Norway, I could not secure a job in this field of study. I ended up being a taxi driver. I am happy because I am still making good money compared to what I would be making if I practised my profession in*

Somalia. With this, I am able to support my family here and send something back home to my extended family.”

4.2.5 Experienced challenges finding employment

Table 8: Experienced challenges finding employment (%)

	Afghans (n=5)	Somalis (n=5)	Ukrainians (n=5)	Total (N=15)
No	20.0 %	20.0 %	40.0 %	26.7 %
Yes	80.0 %	80.0 %	60.0 %	73.3 %

Table 8 above shows that most refugees and immigrants coming to Norway experience difficulty securing employment. Among the 15 respondents interviewed, 73.3% reported that they had some difficulty in getting to work. The percentage is similar between the three groups with Ukrainians having slightly less difficulty. For those who had no trouble getting employed, there is a clear pattern that they were helped by humanitarian organizations such as MIKS and Nysjanse. One of the other respondents who did not have major challenges finding employment was helped by a friend. This underscores findings that having a social network is crucial in helping refugees and immigrants get employment in their new countries.

Respondent 4 (26-year-old male from Afghanistan): *“I did not have major challenges getting my first job. I found my way to Nysjanse through NAV. Here, I made friends and one referred me to the manager at a firm working in waste collection. I was able to secure my first job as a garbage collector. I did not do well in education and only finished my primary school classes before being forced to flee from armed conflict in my village. I believe this is a suitable job that helps me be self-sufficient and not rely on help.”*

Respondent 13 (43-year-old female from Ukraine): *“My husband had a construction firm back in Ukraine. Being enrolled in MIKS was like a blessing because he was placed as a construction worker. However, this is not exactly perfect as he gets to perform low-level menial tasks and not manage the entire work like he is used to.”*

Respondent 7 (36-year-old female from Somalia): *“I work as a cleaner for a school. I got this job through a referral from a friend who does the same job. We met with this friend during my time in Nysjånse. I did not struggle much to land this job and consider myself one of the lucky ones.”*

The findings also highlight how people with education from Norway had better chances of securing employment compared to those with foreign qualifications.

Respondent 14 (34-year-old female from Ukraine): *“I am an immigrant living in Norway. Unlike most other people who have come here recently because of the war with Russia, I have lived here for more than four years and did my Master’s degree here. From the connections I had made while studying, I was able to secure employment easily while undertaking my studies and continued with them after school.”*

4.2.6 Experience of discrimination in the labour market

Table 9: Experience of discrimination in Norway's labour market

	Afghans	Somalis	Ukrainians	
No	0.0 %	0.0 %	80.0 %	26.7 %
Yes	100.0 %	100.0 %	20.0 %	73.3 %
Basis of discrimination				
Language proficiency	X	X	X	
Accent	X	X	X	
Name	X	X	X	
Appearance	X	X		
Religion/Culture	X	X		
Nationality	X	X		
Education	X	X	X	

Age	X	X		
Gender	X	X	X	
Family status	X	X		

Table 9 above shows that most of the respondents have experienced discrimination in their workplace. The different forms of discrimination noted from the interviews were based on language proficiency, accent, name, appearance, religion/culture, nationality, education, gender, age, and family status. Afghans and Somalis experience most of the different forms of discrimination with Ukrainians not facing discrimination on the basis of appearance and culture. One aspect that stood out and which affected all groups is language proficiency. Most of the respondents remarked that not having a good comprehension of the Norwegian language was the most common basis of discrimination.

Respondent 11 (32-year-old male from Ukraine): *“I work for a construction firm that deals with all forms of structures but mainly houses. In assigning tasks, I am usually given those that require minimum communication. I believe the reason for this is because I am not good in the Norwegian language.”*

Respondent 7 (36-year-old female from Somalia): *“When starting my job as a cleaner, our manager insisted that I improve on my Norwegian if I wanted to get more tasks. She explained that this would make communication easier with both the management and clients and they would rather not take more time on someone because of language barrier. This is difficult because I interact minimally with other people in performing duties”*

Respondent 1 (23-year-old male from Afghanistan): *“One of the requirements for being employed as a taxi driver in my firm is that one should have a basic understanding of Norwegian. I understand that a driver has direct interactions with clients and hence should be able to understand the directions they are given. Without understanding Norwegian, it would be very difficult for one to perform well in this profession.”*

Another common factor of discrimination is based on education. Most of the refugees and immigrants have foreign education that is not recognized in Norway. As such, they tend to work in professions that they did not study for; mainly unskilled labour.

Respondent 3 (46-year-old male from Afghanistan): *“Even with my degree in nursing, I cannot secure work as a nurse because my certification is from Afghanistan. I am considering adding some education in this field so that I can get recognized and perhaps get a better job (as a nurse).”*

Respondent 6 (43-year-old female from Somalis): *“I have a diploma in commerce from Somalis. However, I have not been able to secure a job in this practice for the 10 years I have been in this country as the diploma is not relevant. Currently unemployed, the only jobs I have had in the past are menial jobs such as cleaning and babysitting.”*

Respondent 12 (47-year-old male from Ukraine): *“Despite my education and former work experience as a construction manager in Ukraine, I only do unskilled tasks in construction. Here, my education and work experience is not recognized.”*

Nationality is a major basis of discrimination, especially for the Afghans and Somalis. This form of discrimination is also related to name, appearance, religion, and culture. A significant number of respondents from Somalia and Afghanistan reported that they have faced discrimination based on their nationality, how they look, how they dress, and their religion. This is not prevalent among the Ukrainian respondents because they are Europeans just like the Norwegians with Somalis and Afghans coming from a comparatively different region and culture/religion. Somalis and Afghans are from Africa and the Middle East respectively and are predominantly Muslims which serve as a major basis of discrimination.

Respondent 1 (23-year-old male from Afghanistan): *“Discrimination is something that is inevitable in all labour sectors. Sometimes, I feel that it even happens unintentionally. For instance, most job advertisements about job positions have ‘spoken and written Norwegian’ as a major requirement. This automatically eliminates people who are not fluent in this language, mostly refugees and immigrants from other countries.”*

Respondent 2 (40-year-old female from Afghanistan): *“I have stayed in Norway for more than 6 years now. Throughout this time, I have had several jobs but at the moment I am unemployed. Part of the reason for not working is because of frustrations in our job market that made me quit and focus on taking care of my family leaving my husband as the sole breadwinner. One thing that contributed to my leaving work was discrimination in terms of my attire. I am a Muslim and our religion requires us to wear Hijabs. However, this resulted in me being treated differently at the workplace. I knew that some of my colleagues found it weird working with me and were extremely curious about my life. This one time a male colleague asked me what would happen if he were to see my hair. I felt uncomfortable about how people could be insensitive. I could also hear others discuss stereotypes about Muslims, such as suicide bombing and hate of the Western nations as portrayed in movies. This made me quite uncomfortable at my workplace and ultimately decided to quit. Hopefully, organizations and individuals working for them will be more considerate in future.”*

Respondent 3 (46-year-old male from Afghanistan): *“There is a general discrimination against foreigners in the healthcare system. I have encountered several cases where clients requested that I am not assigned to their care. Perhaps they think I am not competent for the job and some may even be just simply racist.”*

Respondent 5 (28-year-old female from Afghanistan): *“I know that discrimination is a sensitive topic for most people but this does not remove the fact that it is happening. Take the case of current Ukrainian refugees that have come to the country. Most of them have already been provided with housing and jobs. As a Somali, I have been in the country for a similar period but I am yet to secure employment. I believe that this is because of nationality and the Ukrainians are favoured compared to us.”*

Respondent 8 (27-year-old male from Somalia): *“There is a common perception that Africans do not perform their jobs well. In my work as a shop attendant, I feel like I am under more scrutiny compared to the natives and even other people from different nationalities. Moreover, African are stereotyped as thieves and this*

contributes to this discrimination. I am not given duties that involve coming in contact with the cash register. I feel bad about this because I know I am an honest person just looking to better my life.”

Respondent 9 (25-year-old female from Somalia): *“I have been lucky to have undertaken my education in Norway. However, this has not completely helped me in the job market and this can be partly attributed to my nationality. Most of my former classmates (natives) have got some job or extended their studies. I have applied for many jobs but have not gotten any and I am actually not even called to interviews. This is quite serious that a friend even suggested that I change my name and adopt one that is Norwegian because I have lived in the country for a while. She assures me that this can help me secure a job easily. This highlights how there is some discrimination in the country’s labour market.”*

A lot of the respondents also remarked that they had minimal contact with natives in their workplaces. This is partly because most of them are helped by humanitarian organizations and family members whose connections involve the unskilled labour sectors common for refugees and immigrants. Moreover, people from different nationalities tend to stay together which minimizes their contact with the natives. The lack of interaction with natives negatively impacts the integration efforts and, in turn, contributes to more challenges in accessing the Norwegian labour market.

Respondent 4 (26-year-old male from Afghanistan): *“I have minimal interactions with Norwegians except for the times I am at work. Because my Norwegian is not good, we don’t communicate much. Outside work, I usually hang out with my fellow Somalis who we had met in Nysjanse and live in the same locality.”*

Respondent 7 (36-year-old female from Somalia): *“It is difficult to interact and mix with Norwegians. Most of them are our bosses and we only relate in a professional manner. When we are not at work we usually stay with our nuclear and extended families and other friends from Somalia that we have been with over the years.”*

Respondent 13 (43-year-old female from Ukraine): *“I came to Norway with my husband and our 11-year-old son. Honestly speaking, we spend most of our time*

together as a family and I have not interacted so much with the natives. Probably this can change as we continue our stay in the country.”

From the interviews conducted, it was noted that gender is also a significant basis of discrimination in the Norwegian labour market. There are some sectors that are male-dominated whereas others are female-dominated. This is a common theme in most areas of the world and Norway also falls victim to it. For instance, the caregiving and cleaning sectors are female-dominated whereas the construction and taxi sectors are male-dominated.

Respondent 10 (38-year-old male from Somalia): *“In our sector, I have not encountered a female taxi driver. I guess the general belief is that this is a job for men and no women bother venturing into it.”*

Another emergent theme of discrimination, though not much prevalent, was that of family status. One respondent remarked that there was a job where they asked about one’s family status in the interview. The general perception is that parents with young children to take care of were not suitable as employees because they needed much time off for their maternal duties.

Respondent 7: *“There was an interview that I attended for shop grocery store attendants. One interview question that stood out was if I was married and the number of children I had. Apparently, Muslim women from countries such as Somalia have large families and require much time away from their job to take care of family issues. For instance, the child might be sick or there may be an issue at their school.”*

Age as a basis of discrimination was also noted in the interview although not so prevalent among the respondents. There are some jobs where employees prefer older and ‘mature’ people whereas others want young and energetic people.

Respondent 12 (47-year-old male from Ukraine): *“When I was introduced to the construction firm by MIKS, there were concerns about my age and health. The foreman directly asked me if I was well enough to do some heavy lifting works that were required on the site. I know jobs in the construction site require energetic people with no major health complications but I was up for the task. So far, I believe I have performed excellently.”*

5. Discussion

This section presents an interpretation of the results of the study and discusses their implications. The section addresses the research questions and also presents a comparison of the findings with existing literature.

5.1 Emergent themes

Each country has its own traditions on labour market regulation and how it affects refugees and immigrants. There are some challenges that these groups face when moving to a specific country. In this study, the focus has been on the Norwegian labour market. The analysis of the interview with respondents presented here sheds light on the challenges that refugees and immigrants from Afghanistan, Somalia, and Ukraine face in Norway's labour market. Below is a discussion of some important issues that emerged from the analysis.

5.1.1 Language Proficiency as a Factor in Accessing Norway's labour markets

Fosslund (2013) explains that proficiency in the native language of a nation where an individual seeks to work is a crucial aspect of their human capital. Similarly, the findings of this study have highlighted the importance of language proficiency as a factor in accessing Norway's labour market for refugees and immigrants. Norway is a country with a high living standard and a robust labour market which have contributed to it attracting a huge number of refugees and immigrants. However, the language barrier continues to pose a major challenge for these people when seeking employment as they struggle to communicate with employers, colleagues, and clients.

The significance of language proficiency in accessing the Norwegian labour markets is further underscored by the fact that language skills are considered an essential requirement for many jobs. For instance, one respondent explained that an advertisement she saw specifically asked for language proficiency as a requirement. This shows that it is extremely challenging for a refugee or immigrant with no language training to get employment. Despite efforts by the government and other relevant programs to help teach these people the Norwegian language, the issue remains a significant challenge for them in terms of getting employment. As highlighted by this study, a substantial number of refugees and immigrants, over 33%, have no basic understanding of the Norwegian language.

An interesting finding concerning this topic is the relationship between language proficiency and employment rates for the different groups. Many studies have shown that language proficiency is strongly connected to employment outcomes for refugees and immigrants in Norway meaning that a person with higher language skills is more likely to be employed compared to one with poor skills. For instance, Storen & Wiers-Jenssen (2010) determined that refugees with a greater understanding of the Norwegian language had higher employment rates compared to those with limited comprehension. This finding is corroborated in the present study where the respondents with a basic understanding of the Norwegian language are mostly employed while those with no understanding are unemployed. However, this is not uniformly reflected for the three groups of respondents explored here. While the Somalis and Afghans have better Norwegian language skills compared to the Ukrainians, the Ukrainians still have a higher employment rate. This, as cited by Korzeniewska & Erdal (2021), is due to discrimination among the different groups of refugees and immigrants. Looking at language proficiency as a factor, this study shows that Ukrainian refugees face fewer challenges in accessing the Norwegian labour market in comparison to Afghans and Somalis. The study also reveals that there are various reasons for this including structural and institutional barriers in the country's governance. Even with less proficiency in the Norwegian language, Ukrainians are still able to secure jobs in comparison to Afghans and Somalis.

5.1.2 Education as a Factor in Accessing Norway's labour market

Education is a significant factor in accessing the labour market, especially for refugees and immigrants (Fosslund, 2013). Norway has a highly skilled workforce, and most works need specific educational certifications and qualifications. Hence, having the necessary qualifications enhances the chances of a person finding employment. The findings have highlighted how it is paradoxical that highly educated refugees and immigrants are not able to find skilled work in the professions they studied and end up performing low-level unskilled jobs. This is a finding that is corroborated by many studies on this general topic of immigrants and refugees. All of the groups explored in this study exhibited a lack of appropriate jobs in relation to their education. The reason for this is that they have been educated in their countries of origin (Afghanistan, Somalia, and Ukraine), and that education is not recognized in Norway. Most of the respondents in this study have higher education from their countries of origin but are still unemployed or overqualified for

their current jobs. For instance, Respondent 3 is a certified nurse from Afghanistan but this is not recognized in Norway and she only works as an assistant caregiver for the elderly. On the contrary, the respondents who have studied in Norway, mainly higher education, have no trouble securing jobs which highlights a form of discrimination in the labour market. From the sampled individuals, those who have studied in Norway are all employed except only one who has a high school level education. For instance, Respondent 14 who has a Master's degree from Norway did not have difficulties finding a job as a nurse.

5.1.3 Important Role of social networks and local knowledge

The findings section has highlighted that most refugees and immigrants cluster together and avoid mixing with the natives. This shows that they have no social networks in Norway. This has a negative impact on their integration into the country and, in turn, contributes to the increased challenges they face in accessing labour markets. The findings highlight that some immigrants and refugees have gotten jobs through their social networks. However, this is tied within their nationalities (Somalis, Afghans, and Ukrainians) and hence do not reach some sections of the labour market. Because of this, people are employed in the unskilled labour segment, which is the only position in which they are able to connect with their friends and families coming to the country.

Studies exploring similar topics have shown that local knowledge and networks are crucial in activating the skills and usefulness of refugees and immigrants (Meyer, 2001; Anthias, 2007). For them to obtain employment in the local skilled labour market, they require native networks capable of facilitating their access. In a similar study, Aure (2013) noted that most skilled jobs in Norway are not publicly advertised; about 60%. This is true for small and medium-sized enterprises as well as the private sector. Here, it is seen that the country has a significant level of network hiring which is a closed system that is unlikely to attract or reach a heterogeneous applicant pool and is geographically constrained. Majority-based skilled labour networks tend to exclude refugees and immigrants. Meyer (2001) reports that Norway is one of the countries in the world where social networks play a significant role in obtaining employment.

Reluctance or inability to utilize networks is a huge issue for refugees and immigrants in Norway. Most of the respondents explored in this study remark that they have little interaction with the locals which strengthens their challenges in accessing the labour market. Most gave the

impression that they did not socialize much at work and often chose to hang out with their fellow countrymen during their free time. This limits their chances of forming new friendships with the native Norwegians and this limits their social network and local knowledge. Local knowledge is crucial in activating and making an individual's skill relevant as it facilitates other types of knowledge. For instance, it helps an individual understand which positions to apply for. Without knowledge of the organization's environment and practices, refugees and immigrants cannot be able to convince employers that they are suitable for the available positions. And this knowledge is mostly obtained by interacting with the native Norwegians. Without these native networks, refugees and immigrants are not able to expand their human capital.

5.1.4 Important role played by Humanitarian and other relevant institutions in Immigration

Norway is one of the Scandinavian countries with a significant number of refugees and immigrants (Djuve & Grodem, 2014). The country has a Nordic welfare model that is characterized by universal welfare services in addition to the government setting up extensive programs to help refugees and immigrants integrate into the labour market. As identified previously, one such program is the Norwegian Introduction Programme (NIP) which started in 2003. This activation program takes about 2 to 3 years and entails language and on-the-job training (Djuve & Kavli, 2019). The program has a dual nature in that increases labour market opportunities for participants and also regulates their behaviour through the incentives or sanctions it provides. There are also some humanitarian organizations that help refugees and immigrants settle well in Norway including MIKS Ressurssenter for Integrering I Bergen (MIKS Resource Center for Integration) and Nysjanse in Bergen (New Chance Organization) located in Bergen Municipality.

MIKS is a multicultural resource center that works to strengthen equality and diversity in society. It works with inclusion, competence development, innovation, and cultural understanding through projects, courses, communication, and consultancy. In achieving a more inclusive and sustainable society, MIKS collaborates with the public sector, businesses, and other voluntary organizations. It has innovative and unique programs that help immigrants integrate into the Norwegian society. For instance, it has entrepreneurial programs that provides direction to members through practical guidance and support to start and operate their own business ventures.

Nysjanse's main purpose is training refugees and immigrants in Norwegian language, vocational training, and work practices.

The findings have shown that a significant, about half, number of the respondents are enrolled in one of these two organizations. The organizations have played a crucial role in helping the refugees and immigrants secure employment with all of the respondents in these organizations being employed. This underscores the importance of relevant programs and organizations in helping enhance employment opportunities for them. For instance, as has been explained in section 5.1.1 above, language proficiency is a crucial factor for refugees and immigrants in accessing Norway's labour market. To address this challenge the institutions including MIKS, Nysjanse, and the Norwegian government through the Norwegian Integration Program (NIP) have established language training programs to provide language training for these groups of people. This has enhanced the employability of the individuals. The same organizations also offer job training and link refugees and immigrants to jobs in the labour market. Despite the integration efforts provided by these organizations and programs, the findings of the current study show that refugees and immigrants still struggle to find a foothold in Norway's labour market. This highlights the need to enhance the effectiveness of the programs and activities offered by such organizations.

5.1.5 Inevitable Discrimination in Norway's labour market

There are many reasons why refugees and immigrants have a low employment rate in Norway as highlighted by the findings. One reason is the characteristics of the country's labour market. IMDi (2022) explains that Norway has smaller distinctions in the wages of workers compared to most other nations. Because of this, there is a high minimum requirement for competence and productivity. Therefore, employers usually hire people with the most appropriate qualifications to fill in job vacancies. Liebig et al. (2012) add that Norway is one of the nations in the world with a low proportion of employed people in professions with low requirements for formal qualifications and hence it is difficult for persons to get jobs without formal competence. From this, lack of education is seen as a big barrier for everyone notwithstanding their immigration status. This extends to having a foreign education which is a major discrimination factor for refugees and immigrants. As discussed above, education and qualifications from other countries are often not recognized in Norway for most skilled occupations and this places them at a disadvantage.

Other sources of discrimination in the Norwegian labour market stem from personal characteristics. This involves aspects such as nationality, religion, age, and race among others. The findings of the study show that all groups of refugees and immigrants interviewed for the study face some form of discrimination. In terms of personal characteristics, Ukrainians face less discrimination compared to Afghans and Somalis. The reason for this is that they are Europeans just like the native Norwegians. This highlights the extent of discrimination in the labour market and the significant challenges that Afghan and Somali refugees and immigrants face in accessing it. In other aspects such as language proficiency, accent, and gender, all groups including Ukrainians face discrimination.

5.2 Operationalizing the Conceptual Framework

As explained in the introduction, a conceptual framework helps demonstrate the theoretical and empirical foundations of the research and highlights how it fits within the broader context of related literature. For this study, the selected conceptual framework is the institutional theory. This theory suggests that organizations and social structures are influenced by institutional and cultural values and norms. In the context of the Norwegian labour market, the theory explains the challenges that refugees and immigrants experience in accessing employment opportunities. A key tenet of the theory is that established values and norms create barriers to entry for persons who do not fit within the prevailing cultural context. In the Norwegian context, the findings of this study have shown that refugees and immigrants face challenges accessing the labour market because of discriminatory practices and attitudes based on different factors.

The institutional theory also highlights the importance of cultural frames and institutional logic in influencing the behaviour of organizations. In Norway's labour market, the institutional logic of many employers may be to employ persons who fit most closely with the dominant cultural context or who they perceive as most "Norwegian". This explains the numerous bases of discrimination identified in the findings section. For instance, Respondent 8 reported that because he is from Africa he is stereotyped as being lazy and a thief and hence was not given tasks involving handling money in his job as a shop assistant. Similarly, the assistant caregiver, Respondent 3, reported that some clients request native caregivers instead of her, an Afghanistan. There are numerous cases in the findings that highlight different reasons for discrimination including based

on language proficiency, accent, name, appearance, religion/culture, nationality, education, gender, age, and family status.

Moreover, institutional theory explains that a major characteristic of social structures is inertia and resistance to change. This means that it is difficult to alter the existing practices and norms. In the Norwegian context, it is difficult to change the discriminatory practices subjected to the refugees and immigrants in accessing the labour market; even in the face of overwhelming evidence on the importance of these groups for the host society. In order to address this resistance to change, institutional theory explains that it is necessary to disrupt the existing practices and norms and in so doing establish new institutional logics that are more welcoming and accepting for the immigrants and refugees. This is possible by altering programs and policies toward those that promote diversity and inclusivity. There should also be targeted interventions that specifically address barriers that these people face when interacting with the Norwegian labour market. Based on this conceptual framework, the study concludes that by acknowledging and addressing the role of institutional values and norms in influencing Norway's labour market, it is possible to establish a more equitable and inclusive system that benefits every person and the whole Norwegian society in large.

6. Conclusion

This chapter provides a summary of the main findings, their implications for the field or practice, and recommendations for future research.

6.1 Summary

The main aim of this study was to contribute knowledge about how refugees and immigrants interact with Norway's labour market. In particular, the study focused on refugees and immigrants from Afghanistan, Somalia, and Ukraine. The findings have highlighted how these groups face challenges in accessing employment opportunities in the Norwegian labour market. There are structural and institutional factors that result in refugees and immigrants being discriminated against in their interaction with the labour market. The refugees and immigrants faced discrimination in accessing the labour market based on factors such as language proficiency, accent, name, appearance, religion/culture, nationality, education, gender, age, and family status. While all groups experienced discrimination based on education, language proficiency, accent, nationality, gender, and age; Ukrainians fared better in terms of appearance, name, religion/culture, and family status than Afghans and Somalis. Language proficiency and education were perceived as crucial factors in accessing the Norwegian labour market. Programs and activities run by the government and other humanitarian organizations are also shown to be crucial in helping immigrants and refugees integrate into Norway's labour market. From these findings and based on the institutional theory, the study concludes that it is necessary to disrupt the existing practices and norms and in so doing establish new institutional logics that are more welcoming and accepting for the immigrants and refugees.

6.2 Recommendations

From the findings and discussion, the study recommends that:

- ***Enhance language training efforts:*** A central concept of integration efforts in any setting is language training. This affects all the groups of refugees and immigrants explored in this study. This investment is crucial in helping them enhance employment rates in the short term and also has positive long-term impacts. The sample used study has shown that most refugees and immigrants still lack a proper understanding of the Norwegian language. Enhancing efforts in language training would guarantee that these people are more successful in adjusting to the

labour market. As such, the government through its integration programs and policies, and the identified humanitarian organizations should enhance language training. To increase its effectiveness, it should be made mandatory and free for all refugees and immigrants entering the country.

- ***Offer formal education:*** Another major finding of the study is that having foreign education is a significant determinant of unemployment and over-qualification for refugees and immigrants. Other related studies have shown that formal education obtained in the host country is a crucial determinant of employment compared to foreign education (De Vroome & Van Tubergen, 2010; Djuve & Kavli, 2019). Therefore, the study recommends that the Norwegian government should invest more in offering formal education, particularly vocational education, to refugees and immigrants to help boost their employment opportunities. Of the respondents explored in the study, only one was enrolled in vocational education. This can also be supplemented by providing more training on job search skills and practical skills at an early stage of the integration process.
- ***Educate the public on the importance of diversity:*** In this age, the issue of diversity and inclusivity is one that is commonly explored in all spheres of life. The study has shown that there is inherent discrimination against refugees and immigrants. While all the groups explored face discrimination in terms of their nationality, language proficiency, and foreign education with most working in the unskilled labour sector. The study has highlighted that the Somalis and Afghans face further discrimination based on their appearance (non-European), names, religion, culture, and family status. This shows that the natives do not appreciate the importance of diversity which, in turn, leads to poor employment outcomes for these two groups. To remedy this, rather than just focus on programs targeting refugees and immigrants the government should launch programs to raise awareness among the natives on the need to incorporate these groups into Norwegian society.
- ***Introduce pertinent integration policy reforms:*** The recommendation outlined above cannot be achieved without necessary policy reforms. There need to be policy initiatives that address the identified recommendations i.e. increase language training efforts for refugees and immigrants, offer them formal education; and educate the general public on the importance of diversity and inclusivity.

6.3 Limitations and Future Research Areas

Qualitative analysis depends significantly on the ability of the researcher to be critically aware of personal assumptions as well as differences in language and culture. I believe that I have ensured consideration of the context in dealing with this topic. I have demonstrated transparency and rigour by providing sufficient evidence in the analysis section using extensive quotes from the interviews. In general, I believe that this study has adopted an appropriate approach that has allowed for a reflective focus on the subjective lived experience of immigrants and refugees. All in all, the findings of the study remain partial, emergent, and tentative.

Through the use of a purposefully sampled group of refugees and immigrants, this study aims to shed more light on the issues that these groups face when interacting with Norway's labour market. Because this study uses the subjective accounts of respondents, it is difficult to replicate. Nonetheless, it is crucial to have similar studies to validate and nuance the current findings.

I conducted and transcribed the interviews and in this endeavor ensured that the views of the participants were captured accurately. The challenges in spoken language differences were offset by carefully observing non-verbal language including tone of voice, gestures, and body language. Moreover, I used respondents who understood English as interpreters for other respondents.

Given the literature gap in the experiences of refugees and immigrants from different countries with regard to interacting with Norway's labour market, this study – despite its limitations – addresses this gap and provides crucial knowledge on the experiences of Afghan, Somali, and Ukrainian people. A crucial contribution of this study is that it provides the perspective of the refugees' and immigrants' own voices. This perspective is crucial in the general debate concerning discrimination of refugees and immigrants in employment opportunities.

This study used a comparatively small sample and hence is not extensively generalizable. Still, the evidence it provides is crucial and it being in Bergen Municipality can be applicable to other areas of Norway. Moreover, it can also provide useful insights for similar Nordic countries. The current study also provides a solid base for designing other studies in other contexts. Future research on this topic should entail a deeper analysis of the experiences of different immigrants and refugees. It can be a study with a larger sample adopting methods like survey, mixed methods,

and grounded theory or a more committed and profound phenomenological approach using fewer respondents to investigate the different types of refugee and immigrant experiences, needs, and contexts. Furthermore, consideration should be given to specific sectors and not the whole labour market.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Guide

The interview guide focused on questions about work experience and the current and future situation of the study participants. An audio recorder was used during the interviews and then later transcribed by the researcher. An interpreter was used if the participant did not understand English (which will be the main language used to conduct the interviews). The interpreters were mainly other respondents with better understanding of the English language. I also took note of other verbal and non-verbal communications and record them to aid in the analysis (utterances, facial expression, tone of voice, gestures).

1. Introduction and Icebreaker

I thank the respondent for accepting to take part in the study, explains the purpose of the study, seeks consent, and assures participant of anonymity and confidentiality of the interview.

2. Demographic information

- a) Hello. Please state your age and gender
- b) What is your country of origin?
- c) How long have you stayed in Norway?
- d) What is your migratory/refugee status?
- e) Do you have a family here in Norway? How many members?
- f) Are you employed? Which organization/work?
- g) Where did you study? What is the highest education level you have attained?

3. Lived experiences of the participants

- a) Do you speak Norwegian?
- b) Which people do you interact with most?
- c) How do you rate your interactions with Norwegian natives?

- d) How do you rate your interactions with government agencies?
- d) Are you comfortable with your place of residence?
- e) Are you able to comfortably satisfy your needs and/or that of your family?

4. Work experiences of the participants

- a) How did you get your current/former employment? (If employed)
- b) Did you get assistance from the government or any other relevant organization?
- c) Are you happy with the job you are doing? (Please elaborate on your answer)
- d) What are the challenges you face in your work environment?
- e) How do you overcome these challenges?
- f) Do Norwegian employees you work with encounter similar challenges?
- g) In your opinion, how can the government and other relevant bodies help refugees/immigrants in relation to getting employment?

5. Finalizing the Interview

- a) Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you for your time!