

Master's thesis

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Iranian Families' Experiences of Migration and Social Life in Norwegian Context

Master's thesis in Childhood Studies

Supervisor: Tatek Abebe

November 2020

NTNU
Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Faculty of Social and Educational Sciences
Department of Education and Lifelong Learning



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Abstract

Migration is not a new phenomenon in Iran. However, during recent years and due to several reasons including financial hardships and social suppression, the number of Iranian families who migrate to other countries has been increasing steadily. Norway is one of the popular destinations among Iranians. No matter the reason or procedure of migration, immigrants face multiple difficult circumstances such as economic or social challenges.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the lived experiences of Iranian migrants, both children and their parents. It aims to learn about how they perceive some aspects of social life and integration process. In additions, this study strives to provide an image of how their knowledge of coming from a quite different cultural and value system, is implemented in the context of a new society and shapes their current social experiences of living in Norway.

The research was conducted in Trondheim, Norway and the participants were 9 Iranian families who migrated to Norway over the course of the last twenty years. The sample consisted of 27 participants, including 10 children (3 males and 7 females) and 17 parents (8 males and 9 females). Given the fact that this is a qualitative study, participatory methods such as individual interviews, focus group discussions and essay writing were methods of data collection used in order to give participants the opportunity to voice and share their own perspectives about the research questions.

The theoretical foundations of the study revolve around social studies of children and childhood, family sociology and generational order, integration theory and the concept of agency. These theories served the research as lenses through which to interpret the fieldwork data.

The findings of this research present diverse daily challenges that child and adult participants deal with. The challenges range from language acquisition to hardships of socially mingling with the locals in the host society. The severity and deep effects of challenges on Iranian immigrants on both individual and family levels, are the main findings of the study. Additionally, research findings elaborate on the strategies used by participants to overcome the challenges of migration such as learning social and cultural codes.

The study suggests that since social and cultural integration of the immigrants is a two-way street imposing responsibility on both immigrants and the host society, awareness of the advantages of a diverse community should increase by more extensive governmental and media efforts. For this reason, I desire my research to help upgrade the status of social life and integration of immigrant families in Norway, as well as to contribute to the growing body of the social studies of children and childhood.

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List of Acronyms

etc. "et cetera", and so forth

e.g. "exempli gratia", for example

SSB Statistisk Sentralbyrå (Statistics Norway)

UNCRC United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Chapter One: Introduction

The topic of migration is not a new phenomenon, nor is it something unique that is related to a particular time period or a specific place. Humans have migrated across the world throughout history due to various reasons such as finding new lands, enjoying more religious and political liberty and so on (Barter, 2002). Although there are different kinds of migration; most of the attention before the 1980s was focused on internal migration which is a movement within national borders including rural-rural, urban-rural and urban-urban migrating and mostly from rural to urban areas towards urbanization (Skeldon, 2006). According to Kwankye, Anarfi, Tagoe, and Castaldo (2009), besides the importance of a migrant's agency in deciding to migrate, other factors such as imbalance of resources, facilities and income level as structural elements are powerful causes of internal migration. Since the 1980s, attentions have shifted towards international migration from developing countries into developed countries, due to some push factors such as access to higher education, conflicts in the home country; for instance war, decline in the birth rate that resulted in a shortage of labour forces, improving one's livelihood by moving to a destination country with a high standard of living, etc.

Iran has a relatively high rate of migration that has "steadily increased from approximately 0.5% in 1970, to 1.3% in 1978, to 2.2% in 1979, and finally to 3.8% in 2019" (Azadi, Mirramezani, & Mesgaran, 2020) and Norway, based on the statistics, is among the first 10 European countries where most of the immigrant Iranian population live (Wikipedia, 2020).

Nevertheless, migration is a huge social change in the life which can bring enormous stress levels into the lives of immigrants, particularly children. Several studies have centered their focus on migration and its effects on migrants both in the domain of childhood studies and other social sciences such as psychology, anthropology, etc (Hagan, MacMillan, & Wheaton, 1996; Mohammadi, Fombonne, & Taylor, 2006; Zhao, Wang, Zhou, Jiang, & Hesketh, 2018). This study is dedicated to investigating the living experiences of Iranian immigrants' families. It aims at exploring the perspectives of both children and their parents to provide insight into how they integrate within Norwegian society as well as develop new knowledge on what they think of the social aspects of life in their new context in Norway.

1.1 Personal Motivation

My interest in the topic of migration is linked to two distinct matters. Primarily, in the first semester of my studies at NTNU, I took a course on children in the global south. One of the lectures in that course was about migration and relevant issues to it such as the triggers for why people migrate, how it effects families and children particularly. I found

the articles quite mesmerizing and highly interesting. Since then there was no doubt in my mind that I wanted to link my thesis to the topic of migration.

Secondly, on a personal level, as an Iranian who decided to migrate to Norway at the age of 26, it is fascinating to learn about my fellow countrymen's and women's experiences of leaving Iran as well as their viewpoints on making a life in Norway as a country with very different culture, nature, food, social life, etc. Although I have migrated to Norway as an adult who does not have any children, I also became curious to know more about what positive and negative effects such change (migration) might have on children, intergenerational relationships and family dynamics in the country of destination. Through the different courses in the program in childhood studies I developed a keen interest to know what it means for a child to migrate to a new country and how life changes for them. Furthermore, I decided to include parents in my research, as well because I find the topic of intergenerational relationships and dynamics very intriguing.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Migration is a broad topic. As United Nations (2020) has defined it, migration is "The movement of people from one place in the world to another for the purpose of taking up permanent or semi-permanent residence, usually across a political boundary". There exist various drives for migration and the experiences are different according to variant groups of people. Hence, it is important to dedicate adequate researches onto this topic about diverse populations and dig into their narratives of the topic.

This study centres the focus on Iranian families living in Trondheim, Norway. The Iranian migration trend and drives have changed throughout time and they have been discussed in detail by Azadi et al. (2020). Based on their article, Iranians have chiefly migrated due to factors such as violation of human rights, social and political repression, lower income compared to developing countries, economic stagnation and unemployment which are more or less linked to specific events in the country's history; the most recent one being economic sanctions imposed in 2012 and 2018.

No matter the motivation for migration, people's lives are highly influenced by migration since the family's structure is altered by this decision. There is a lot of research that highlights the challenges that family members go through after migration. For instance, Bornstein and Bohr (2011) argue that parents and children undergo profound transformations in different ways. Parents may come across difficulties when trying to adapt to acculturation processes such as parental attributes in the new society, etc, that may destabilize parent-child relationships. Children, on the other hand, do not necessarily experience the same challenges as their parents.

Bryant (2005) has reported that migration brings both challenges and opportunities for children. Marginalization, discrimination, social services availability, issues to the rights to citizenship and identity, financial insecurity of the family _ that involves children one way or another _ are a few of the challenges that a migrant child might have to deal with.

The concepts discussed above such as acculturation, marginalization, citizenship rights, etc are connected to the integration concept. Integration means "equal opportunities for all the participants in society" (Thorud, Haagensen, Henningsen, & Hegna, 2011, p.43). Given the fact that in Norwegian language, the word *likhet* is used to address both equality and similarity, one may conclude that to be considered equal, a person ought to be similar in Norwegian society. Eriksen (2013) therefore states that acceptance of difference is ideologically a hard task for locals in Norway. Although acculturation is a fair solution for integrating into the host society, I believe maintaining the original values and culture for an immigrant is a key function or even a challenge. This is particularly applicable to adults and older members of family since they have deep connections to their roots after many years of living in their home countries.

1.3 Research Aims and Questions

The purpose of the study is to examine the experiences of Iranian families after moving to Norway. The experiences I am interested to gain knowledge of, are their perspectives about social, cultural, educational, etc aspects of life as well as intergenerational relationships of children and families in Norway. This is predicated on the assumption that all family members come across challenges after having moved from another country. In case of parents, I am interested in finding out how changes in work/study environment, finding new social network due to losing previous connections as well as personal and interpersonal issues at home, would challenge them.

In case of children, I assumed that those children who migrated to Norway along with their parents would face pretty much the same challenges as their parents. For instance, difficulty in learning the language and making friends. I predicted children who were later born in Norway to face slightly different challenges. Since they are born and raised here, language cannot be a major barrier. However, their parents come from a different culture, they speak a different language at home and clearly, they do not resemble local Norwegians. Yet, they are still foreigners. Therefore, I wanted to find out what sort of challenges this group struggle with, being a foreigner.

Having the above-mentioned matters in mind, I designed the main research question to be:

What are the experiences and challenges of Iranian immigrant families in Norway?

Afterwards, I designed three chief questions of the research to be as followed.

- What are the perspectives of Iranian children and families about everyday life in Norway? How do they experience and articulate the social, educational, cultural, economic life and challenges linked to living in a new country?
- How do parents and children perceive and negotiate effects of these challenges of life in a new culture and society?
- How Iranian children and families try to integrate into Norwegian society?

Based on the research questions, the present study seeks to explore the deep impacts of migration on Iranian families from multiple perspectives in regard to challenges. In this matter, research objectives are:

- To assess Iranian migrant families' viewpoints, challenges and perspectives of multiple aspects of life in Norway such as social, educational, cultural aspects.
- To explore the ways in which families articulate their positions in a new different country and effects of challenges on them.
- To examine how the process of integrating into Norwegian society takes place and to investigate the degrees to which Iranian families (un)successfully integrate into the new home society.

1.4 Significance of the Topic

As discussed earlier, a large number of studies have examined features of immigrant children in the domain of social and cultural psychology, education, health care, and social services (Mohammadi et al., 2006). Although there are large bodies of researches about children's migration in Asian contexts, the numbers of research papers that are specifically carried out with Iranian families is limited in the domain of childhood studies. I felt like there might be a gap in childhood studies literature since there is not enough information or scientific data about Iranian immigrants. Iranians as Asian Muslim participants coming from the Middle East, can bring compelling knowledge to the research field of childhood studies since doing the research with a less researched population can take new ideas into the field. For instance, policy makers might form better integration policies collecting data from research with people with different ethnicities living in their countries.

On the other hand, the present research includes families as a unit, not individual children. There is a critical reason for this and that is the salient implications of family ties for the knowledge of children's development and functioning inside homes. Family relationships can influence well-being, psychological health and agency of a child. However, besides family connections, social and cultural contexts may have significant impacts on children

emotionally, cognitively, etc (Kuczynski, 2002). Therefore, it is crucial that we have an insight on how families perform as a unit and react to challenges and events in the host society. Nevertheless, as some researchers (Kuczynski, 2002) remind us, if one tends to acquire a meaningful image of child-parent relationships, there is a need to look at them from a dynamic two-way approach since such relationships are reciprocal at heart.

In additions, I believe it could be abundant to have a more comprehensive approach regarding migration issue. Having access to each generational information helps our understanding of the topic grow as much as possible. Also, the other focus of the topic would be on the relationships among family members, for instance parents' relationship with each other and with their children. I am curious to learn what type of challenges Iranian families face after migrating to Norway in order to integrate into the new society.

1.5 Outline of the Thesis

In this section I try to frame an overall picture of the study. Present research is conducted with Iranian families living in Trondheim, Norway. **Chapter two** lays out the necessary background reflections of the participants' country of origin, Iran, as well as the cultural perspectives of family and children inside the country. One section of the chapter is dedicated to history of migration from Iran and specifically to Norway.

Chapter three deliberates theoretical frameworks of the study including social studies of children and childhood which is the base for all the studies in the field. The concept of agency is another theory development which brings out notable insights to the topic of migration, particularly about children. Moreover, this chapter presents generational order and integration theories that are efficient lenses that help get a better understanding of the topic of study.

Methodological implications of the study are discussed in **chapter four**. The chapter brings methods and research design to the front. It contains how field entry and sample gathering unfolded for me as the researcher. I will present my experiences as an insider researcher in the field. Then ethical issues, limitations and challenges of doing the research are brought forth.

Chapter five focuses on the first part of data analysis which concerns children's experiences of life in Norway. It comes in two sections regarding unique experiences of children who were born and raised in Norway and the ones who came here at an older age. Regardless, I will analyse and discuss challenges that children went through as foreigners in the society as well as how these challenges affected them in daily life. The last part of chapter contains children's outlooks about negative and positive points of living in Norway.

The second part of data analysis, **chapter six** presents experiences of parents after moving to Norway. Again, challenges and their effects on participants' lives are discussed. Additionally, advantages and disadvantages of living in Norway based on parents' answers to research questions are included in this chapter.

In the end, **chapter seven**, summarizes main findings of the research and the study finishes with the presentation of a few suggestions and recommendations for research and policy making.

Chapter Two: Background

This chapter is designed to present some necessary background information for the research. This study was conducted in Norway with Iranian participants. There is not much research done about Iranian culture with Iranian participants or respondents. Consequently, Iran, its culture, people's lifestyles and the country's status especially in the field of childhood studies and children's rights are unknown to many readers. Thus, it is of great significance to introduce Iran's background in this chapter. Hence, I will attempt to shed light on issues such as culture, values and family dynamics in the context of Iran which can hopefully help the readers develop a better understanding of the study.

2.1 Profile of Iran

Iran, officially called the Islamic Republic of Iran, is a large country in Western Asia with 1,684,195 km² (636,372 sq. mi) of territory. The population is 82 million which makes it the world's 18th most populated country and the second largest country in the middle east (Wikipedia, 2019). Since Iran is a Muslim Shiite country that has many Arab neighbour countries in the West and the South, many people might consider it to be an Arab country. However, the findings of a cluster analysis that Javidan and Dastmalchian (2003, p.130) undertook, implies that "although Iran is a middle eastern country, it is not part of Arab culture". They continue by adding that instead, Iran is "part of the South Asian cultural cluster consisting of countries such as India, Thailand, and Malaysia". These countries' roots and history (in particular Iran and India) are tied together since early 1500s and Iran's official language, Persian was spoken in South Asia for many years leaving behind a population of Persian speaking people in the area (Ibid).

2.2 History of Migration in Iran

Iran is very rich considering culture and history. The country is home to one of the world's oldest civilizations, beginning with the formation of the Elamite kingdoms in the fourth millennium BCE. Of course, the country has gone through various changes and fluctuations throughout the history which is out of the scope of this study to go through all of them. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, I decided to shortly describe history of migration in Iran.

Migration in Iran has a long history and was shaped due to plenty of different reasons and happenings in different eras. Iranian migration goes back to AD 936 when the Arabs conquered Persian empire and forced people to change their religion from Zoroastrian to Islam. Some people refused to do so and as a result, moved out of the country, mostly towards western India, trying to save their lives.

Thousands of years later in 19th century, it became popular among Iranian students to go to Europe in order to study and learn modern technology (Ashraf, 1997). Although lots of

them came back home to take over high ranked positions, some of them stayed in Europe. Those who came back home, brought western values and ideas with themselves which aimed for the country to become modernized.

In 1905 to 1910, Constitutional Revolution happened in the country as a result of modernization activities under the command of Reza Shah (Alyasan, 2000). The revolution failed but influenced some transformations that finally led to a westernized Iran. Abrahamian (2018) explains that socio-economic changes done by Reza Shah such as establishment of western style administrations, military, etc were among them. Years later, when his son, Mohammad Reza Shah (1941-1979), became the king, Iran had already changed its profile quite a lot by establishment of the modern and western style of educations, facilities, administrations, and military (Ibid). In addition, oil production was a great source of revenue which boosted the economic status of Iran. At the same time, people were getting less and less religious and tended to send their children abroad to study.

However, many people were not satisfied with the semi-modernity of the Pahlavi's era (Alyasan, 2000) and did not accept those "new lifestyle" and reforms. This was one of the biggest motives for the Islamic Revolution that occurred in 1979. After this revolution, immigration increased rapidly due to many different motivations. For instance, some people who were related to royal family or monarchy regime, had no other way but to leave Iran. Some non-religious groups of people who were against clergy or belonged to different ethnicities or religions such as Bahá'í, left the country when clergy seized political power. Another wave of migration happened with the beginning of 8-years-war (1980-1988) between Iran and Iraq; those who did not want to attend military service, left Iran for good (Alyasan, 2000).

After 1995, there was a shift in migration pattern from upper and middle classes immigration to lower classes in the society (Waxler-Morrison, Anderson, Richardson, & Chambers, 2005). Though this group was not as educated or skilled as the other groups, they still left the country illegally to live a better life. Most of them requested refugee cases in Europe or USA.

Today, the migration trend is escalating even more. People are becoming poorer due to the decrease in the country's currency value _Rial_, unemployment rate is quite high; 10.8 percent in spring 2020 (Statistical Centre of Iran) and financial pressure is deteriorating every day. Strict sanctions imposed on Iran in 2012 and 2018, have had enormous drawbacks for the country by reducing governmental revenue through considerable reduced oil selling and disrupting industrial and international interactions

(Azadi et al., 2020). Additionally, political changes in the country have worsened since then and danger of internal or external war is threatening Iran.

All the difficulties I mentioned above result in an increasing number of young adults leaving the country in any possible way. Education is among one of the most popular ways of leaving the country among middle-class and low-class society members at the moment because people do not need to invest lots of money and the process is quite straight forward and fast. Besides, high education has always been an important part of Iranian culture which has been rooted for more than a century.

There is a phenomenon called "brain drain" which refers to migration of highly educated and skilled human resource out of a specific country in order to find better job opportunities and a better life. Iran unfortunately has suffered a lot from brain drain in recent years and "... has the second-highest rate of brain drain in the world, with between 150000 and 180000 educated immigrants annually" (Iran Focus, 2019). Most talented young adults who benefited from public school and university system inside the country leave Iran when they are ready to perform for the society. University professors and researchers are among this group of migrants, as well. Just 285,000 well-trained Iranians left the country between 1999 and 2002 (Javidan & Dastmalchian, 2003).

It is worth mentioning that discussions of emigration of educated highly skilled people has moved beyond the mere brain drain as a problematic issue. As Azadi et al. (2020, p.21) argue the Iranian diaspora community may help further development of Iran by mechanisms such as the return of talent and knowledge to fill up gaps in technology and science, financial investments or even promoting tourism as a source of earning "foreign currency". However, such beneficial acts in favour of the country are yet to come (Ibid).

Today, the total exact number of emigrants from Iran is not specified. There is a difference between statistics of Iran's National Organization for Civil Registration (NOCR) and the official statistics of destination countries, but "over 3.1 million Iranian-born people have emigrated from Iran, out of whom over 2.6 million (83%) have left the country since 1979" (Azadi et al., 2020, p.22). USA (32%), Canada (14%), Germany (11%), United Kingdom (6%), Sweden (5%), and Turkey (5%) are the countries with the highest number of Iranian migrants (Ibid). Norway has the 20th place in this list (Wikipedia, 2020).

2.2.1 Iranian Migration to Norway

Norway has a population of 5,295,619 million with a total number of 58,192 immigrants, based on the last statistics published by Statistics Norway in 2018. The number of immigrants in Norway has been increasing in the past decade (SSB, 2019). Based on statistics from SSB, 14 percent of the population is consisted of immigrants (2019).

One of the non-western countries whose immigrants have been coming to Norway for labour, education or as refugees, is Iran (Daugstad, 2008). Nearly 18,075 Iranian migrants live in Norway. This number does not include children with a Norwegian parent or those who were born in Norway of immigrant parents (SSB, 2019).

Kamalkhani (1988) describes three phases of Iranian migration to Norway as a- Before 1979 and continued shortly after Islamic revolution in 1980, b- from 1980 until 1984 and c- from 1984 to 1986. She argues that socio-economic changes in Iran, caused migration of educated and skilled human resource. Some of those people moved to Norway. She believes this group were not refugees whatsoever. In fact, they were either students or spouses of Norwegians who used to work in Iran's oil industry before Islamic revolution. However, the number of Iranian refugees who came to Norway was considerably more than the latter group. They were basically coming from ethnic or religious minorities like "Kurds", "Turks" or "Bahá'ís" who had conflicts with the government. These people were less educated or skilled compared to the first group and some of them did not even speak English by the time they migrated from Iran (Alyasan, 2000).

A new wave of migration began since 2005, the first round of presidency of Mahmood Ahmadinejad. The second round of his presidency in 2009 came along with controversial election resulting in protests and internal conflicts. According to Hamseda News Analysis Website (2009), awful economic status, human rights violation and lack of personal and social freedom, made people even more unsatisfied and disappointed and led lots of students and specialists "escaping" from the country's unstable position. Under this circumstances, Norway's free educational system and outstanding welfare organizations seem promising and have made it a popular destination among this group.

It is worth mentioning that lots of Iranians who live in Norway, came here as PhD or post-doctoral fellows. Thus, Iranian community is a well-educated and high-status community in Norway. As in 2009, while university education average among immigrants demonstrated 26%, the number for Iranian community showed 43.5% which dwarfs of all other immigrant communities except for China (Scoop independent news). As most of the former highly educated group are skilled workers, skilled labour migration will be reviewed briefly.

Skilled labour migration is seen as the new wave of migration which has been growing rapidly since 2010/2011 according to International Labour Office (2015). Approximately one third of all skilled workers are from Asian countries (Ibid). Hanson (2010) affirms that European countries specifically, have become dependent on foreign skilled workers due to the aging of their population.

Although the migration of skilled workers might cause brain drain in developing countries, it results in brain circulation that helps “... keep the global economic machinery functioning” (Saxenian, 2002 cited in Bailey & Mulder, 2017, p. 2690). Therefore, this group of migrants have a high economic value for the host countries (Ibid). Despite the importance of economic discussions of skilled labour migration, I agree with Bailey and Mulder (2017, p. 2691) who consider skilled workers as “... not just economic agents but also social, cultural and political agents marked by race/ethnicity, class and gender”.

2.3 National Cultural Values in Iran

Moghadam and Assar (2008) carried out a research on Iranian community based on Hofstede's model of cultural values (1978-83) that categorizes communities/countries based on five values such as Individualism, Masculinity-Femininity, Power distance, etc. In their study, Iran was found to be a collectivistic society which means people tend to care for the group dynamics and in-group activities. Caring for others and trying not to stand out in the society, can also be translated into a feminine community; meaning what motivates people is the way they interact with others. However, Iran has a long history of favouring men over women which results in gender inequality (Ibid). Regarding unjustified power, clergy introduce themselves as elite part of the society and people are expected to obey them whatsoever (Javidan & Dastmalchian, 2003). On the other hand, people accept a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place, and one should accept power over them with no further justification. We can see this both in family settings that usually father is the most powerful person at home, and in the political power where clergy's power is accepted by people.

Lots of these values may have gone under changes during time, but one has never changed and that is the value of the family for Iranians inside or outside the country. For many Iranians family comes first, then work and friends (The Simorgh, 2013). They also found out people think that values such as honesty, responsibility and independence, should be better developed among Iranian population. Most of the respondents wanted their children to have a university degree, earn good salary or own a company. This finding is consistent with the high position of education in the society mentioned earlier in this chapter.

2.4 Cultural Views Towards Family and Children in Iran

According to Javidan and Dastmalchian (2003), the most distinguishing feature of Iranian culture, is the importance of family and in-group connections. Family wishes and values are prioritized over individual ones.

It is acceptable that men are the head of the house in many families. They are responsible for providing and protecting other family members. Usually men have the last say about

family issues, but it does not mean that women only take care of children or do the housework. Those are of course, the main expected tasks of a woman but many women contribute to the family economy by doing domestic work or working outside home.

Hierarchy and unequal power have always been an issue throughout the whole of Iran's history and could be seen in both leadership and on more personal levels. People consider it polite to not only call each other by family names instead of first names, but also to use titles such as Dr, professor, etc. Children learn about these cultural rituals from an early age. For example, they learn the concept of "ta'arof" which does not have any equivalence in English language but literally means that one should not express his/her ideas directly to others particularly if they contain a criticism. Instead, we use a series of "exaggerated" phrases and gestures which could make others uncomfortable, particularly if they are not familiar with ta'arof culture. This culture is expended in almost all aspects of social life among Iranians and might be difficult to grasp for those unfamiliar with it. A simple example of ta'arof is when there is a guest at home and one child wants to extend their legs in the presence of adults. The parents would apologize to the guest for this action since it is considered impolite.

Children are raised to be well-behaved and "good" students. Education is taken seriously. Students from the first grade are thought to be competitive and their scores are basically a source of validation. Parents care about children's education more than anything else and spend lots of money to get their children into universities particularly public free ones which have better quality. It is desirable for children to at least get a bachelor's degree. Education has always had a strong value in Iranian culture. It goes as far as people even claim that they prefer to have educated neighbours rather than a relative (The Simorgh, 2013). This finding is of great interest for it contradicts with the most valuable source of connection which is family (Ibid). Although growing up in a warm environment with caring people has positive effects for children, it could also lead to feeling levels of control. In a close in-group situation, people, especially children feel forced to satisfy others as well as feeling frustrated because they should always be careful with their words and behaviour all the time (Javidan & Dastmalchian, 2003).

Parents and child-rearing styles have changed a lot with time. While parents used to be very strict and in control of almost all their children's life details before, they tend to adjust to the new parenting styles that are influenced by western culture (Sharifi et al., 2016). Although it is safe to say that most of Iranian parents are still struggling to find the "best" parenting style (Rahkar Farshi et al., 2018). For instance, while parents are coping with the social changes and generational gaps with their children, some of them have difficulty giving their children more freedom or accepting their romantic relationships. Likewise, they are still very much concerned and strict with their children's education (Ibid).

Therefore, there is not a very homogenous community inside Iran since part of the community is moving towards a modern western approach and lifestyle while the other part still sticks to more traditional values, being too conservative.

2.5 Children's Rights in Iran

Iran ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) on 13 July 1994. Therefore, one may think that all children's rights must be taken care of, but the truth is that not all of the rights are practiced as the international ideals. Instead, Iran has made some changes in the rights to make them more consonant with national law which is based on Islamic principles. For instance, according to article 32 of UNCRC, children have the right to be protected from economic exploitation or performing any work that is likely to be hazardous to their health or social development. Also, it is the states parties' duty to ensure the article is applied, but Iran has never ratified international agreements regarding child labour (article 4141 civil code). Children in Iran are allowed to work in types of jobs that are considered to be "safe" like domestic work (Sharifian, 2016).

When it comes to the definition of a child, Iran is consistent and inconsistent with UNCRC at different issues. As in National Child and Adolescent Comprehensive Action Plan (Horizon 1404), which was developed in 2016 (Abed, Kazemi, Azimi, & Mohseni), a child is defined as a person under the age of 18 which is identical to the UNCRC's definition. Hence, it means that over 22 million and approximately 30 percent of Iran's population is consisted of children.

Nonetheless, Iran is an Islamic country and Islamic principles are a critical part of almost all the regulations. In Islam, there is a difference between a child and an adolescent. Adolescence or religious maturity is characterized by 5 things including hair growth in some parts of the body, ejaculation in boys, menstruation in girls, reaching 9 years of age in girls and 15 years in boys, and girls' fertility potential (Jafarilangroodi, 2002). If someone has reached maturity based on these characteristics, he/she is not a child anymore; meaning that in Islam, the period between infancy and adolescence is considered to be childhood. As a result, there is a crucial conflict about the age limit of childhood in Iran.

One may conclude that after reaching maturity, "children" are responsible for duties which normally someone older than 18 years old may have in western countries. For instance, a 9-year-old girl in Iran can "pay for property, trade, and be punished for crimes; there would not be any differences in outcome between civil and criminal liability" (Sharifian, 2016). This leaves a protection gap for girls between the ages of 9 and 18, and boys between 15 and 18. It means that if for instance a girl under 9 years old commits a crime, she will not go to prison. Usually children who committed a crime at these ages, are kept

in juvenile correction centres. They learn different skills and undergo psychological treatments to be able to go back to the society after a while. As Sharifian mentions (2016), they are protected from a criminal record by spending time in these centres. This procedure is similar to what UNCRC suggests for the best interest of the child as in articles 37 and 40 which argue that prison should be the last choice, for the shortest amount of time and children who do end up in prison must have access to legal support and connections to their families in order to promote their well-being.

Islamic teachings say a child has the duty to participate at home according to his or her age and maturity, but the child should not be burdened with any responsibilities beyond his or her ability to carry. In other words, the child has the responsibility to help with duties at home, school, and other group works, but the extent of the partnership must be as much as he or she can (Jafarilangroodi, 2002).

It seems like Iranian law agrees that "the best interest" of the child should be taken into account, but who will decide what the best interest of the child is. The huge problem is that not all families are capable or knowledgeable enough to make the best decisions for their children. Consequently, children's rights are matters of conflict when it comes to Iran.

Physical punishment is another controversial issue in Iran. Article 19 of UNCRC argues that state parties should protect the children from all forms of physical or mental violence. Although Iranian government is taking measures to educate families about the proper ways of child rearing and treatment, there is not enough investigation or follow-up of the cases of child maltreatment. Hence, despite governmental efforts, there are still many families who use corporal or mental punishments for their children. Unfortunately, nor welfare organization neither police, interfere in punishments which occur in a family setting because they are considered as "domestic violence" that do not disrupt the public. Therefore, domestic violence keeps happening against children- and women-. Every now and then, we hear a piece of news about children who were punished physically at schools by teachers or headmasters who may have not received proper training. Neither they face strict law for their actions (Iranwrite, 2019)

On the other hand, education is free for every child as well as plenty of health-care services. This is in fact a great step towards children's rights that are in line with articles 28 (the right for education) and 24 (the right for access to health services) in the UNCRC. However, these efforts do not provide the opportunity for all children to benefit from free educational and health-care system. Lots of children who come from poor or single-parent families, or families struggling with drugs and addiction, do not attend school. Instead,

loads of these children are found working on the streets or getting involved with illegal activities like selling drugs.

National Child and Adolescent Comprehensive Action Plan (Abed et al., 2016) named 18 of the limitations and weak points of its plan. Three of them are listed in the following part:

- Theoretical challenges in defining some issues related to children such as minimum age of criminal responsibility, etc.
- The traditional view of children's rights and misconceptions.
- Disapproval of children's rights as one of the most important issues of society and neglect of childhood as a very sensitive and determined period.

As Birnbaum, Cetinkaya, and Harper (2014) argue, such domestic laws adopted by Iranian government towards children's rights, contradict the state's responsiveness to implement and protect human rights in an effective manner both in law and in practice.

2.6 Summary

This chapter provides the background foundation of Iran and Iranian immigrants by describing the history and drives of migration throughout the history up to the recent years. It also presents the cultural values both generally in the country and intergenerationally among families. The chapter ends with a brief overview on children's rights in Iran.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

This chapter attempts to present the underlying theoretical approaches which were used as “lenses” throughout the research process. These theories inspired me further along the way of analysing data to help reach my initial objective which was to gain a better insight into the lives of Iranian immigrant children and their parents residing in Norway.

As theory plays a crucial role in research via expanding our horizon towards the meaning of our collected data as well as enlightening relevant data (Dyblie Nilsen, 2005), I benefited from four variant theoretical bases for this research. At the beginning, the evolution process of social studies of children and childhood is discussed followed by the three main approaches in the new paradigm of childhood studies. Afterwards, a brief glance over the concept of agency and types of it is provided. Next come the theories concerning generational relations as this research deals with the broader image of children in relation to their family and households. Last but not least, the vital theory of integration and its main assets are discussed.

3.1 Social Studies of Children and Childhood

The social studies of children and childhood is a rather new approach in both research and practice while the child concept is not. Philippe Ariés (1982) did a detailed study of how children and society’s view of them has gone through changes. Starting with middle ages (the 10th to the 13th century) when the idea of childhood almost did not exist, children were not considered different from adults, they were instead portrayed as miniature adults in the paintings. Ariés argues that it is only from the 13th century onwards that the new and modern idea of childhood began to emerge. He goes as far to call the modern childhood concept an “invention”. From then on, children started to be portrayed as children with their own childish characteristics wearing special clothes (Ibid). Ariés (1982) then discusses that it was in 18th century when adults actually cared for children and their well-being became a concern for adults.

Then by the end of the 19th century, developmental psychology pioneered in studying children mainly from “a series of predetermined stages” and by the work of Jean Piaget (Allison James & Prout, 1990). He explained biological facts about children and the idea of universal childhood without taking the effects of cultural and social factors into account. On the other hand, socialization theory was becoming popular between 1950s and 1970s. This so-called functional theory basically studies the ways in which children internalize the norms and values in a specific society and by doing so, pass through childhood into adulthood as adults who have learned how to be a society member (Woodhead & Montgomery, 2002). Needless to say, the picture of the child in this theory is an immature and irrational being who is passively the recipient of the norms of an adult-based society

who again is passively being shaped by socializing agents such as family and school (Prout & James, 1997). In these disciplines, children were almost “invisible”, incomplete and dependent (Allison James & Prout, 1990) and the process in which children became human adults was the focus of the researches. Thus, children were considered “human becomings” and childhood as a stage which children will grow from (Ibid).

As a reaction or response to the dominance of the two above mentioned disciplines - functionalist sociology and developmental psychology- that level children down to immature biological creatures, the new paradigm of social studies of children and childhood emerged in 1980s. James and Prout (1997) then suggested that children are competent “human beings”, worthy of exploration on their own. As a result, children started to find a much more appropriate situation in some disciplines such as human geography and social anthropology (Ibid). So, social studies of children and childhood began to be more interdisciplinary by drawing upon other disciplines and discourses such as social anthropology, psychology and pedagogy (Alanen, 1992; Qvortrup, 1994). The new paradigm refused to accept a universal and stage-by-stage childhood especially in majority world settings (e.g Penn, 2011) and instead drew attentions to the everyday lives of children and the cultural and social contexts in which childhood is shaped; meaning that childhood and children’s experiences of the contexts could vary enormously within various times and places (Allison James & James, 2012).

3.1.1 Different Perspectives in Social Studies of Children and Childhood

The shift in childhood studies paradigm, altered children’s positions as passive objects of the study to active actors and agents who participate in and influence not only their own lives, but also the lives of people around them as well as the contexts they live in (Prout & James, 1997). So, the child-centred research was developed to ease children’s participation (Allison James & James, 2012), to give value and weigh to their perspectives and knowledge although different from adults. The implication of this approach can be found in the decisions that are made for children in “the best interest” of them.

Alanen (2001b) categorized this interdisciplinary paradigm into three different, yet close approaches that can influence researches in social studies of children and childhood. These are: 1- Actor oriented approach, 2- Constructionist approach and 3- Structural approach.

An actor-oriented approach supports children to have a voice in the decisions that influence them. Children in this viewpoint are actors of their lives’ scenario; actor-oriented approach looks at them as active social actors who “participate to form their own childhood” (James and James, 2012, p.3). However, they are more than actors. For Mayall (2002) children are also agents; meaning that by doing things, they contribute to social and cultural (re)productions. As James & James (2012) pointed out an active participation is related to

the concept of agency which means the capacity of individuals to act independently. Agency concept would be described in more details in the next section.

The idea of viewing childhood as a social construction roots back to the work of Berger and Luckman (1991) who suggested that many aspects of our lives in the world around us are not real; instead they are created by people in social system. Jenks (1996) developed this idea further into childhood studies by mentioning that childhood is not a natural and universal concept but a social construct that people collectively create in one specific setting. Thereupon, there are variations of childhood as a result of influences of different societies and the weight of attitudes they put on childhood (Alanen, 2001a). Hence, childhood is a social construct that varies from culture to culture, place to place. This view of distinct childhoods helps us realize how and why people experience dissimilar childhoods around the world.

And lastly, childhood in structural sociology of childhood is a rather permanent form of generational structure (Alanen, 2001b) which is independent of individual children's status. It means that a child departs the childhood structure (for reasons such as aging, change in marital status, etc), while another child enters the structure. Therefore, childhood always keeps its fixed permanent nature. Within this line of thinking, childhood is similar to other permanent social structure such as gender, race and social class. The structural approach considers childhood as a social category related to macro-level settings and does not really focus on individual children (Alanen, 2001a; Qvortrup, 2009). As Ansell (2005, p.22) argues "particular childhoods are produced through particular institutions, ranging from global political-economic structures to families and communities". Children's lives are influenced by social structures and that is why there is a need to investigate how children -as a social persisting structural unit- form and navigate relationships with their surrounding environments (Ibid). One form of this navigation is the relationship between children (minority group) and adults (majority group) that is further discussed in this chapter as generational order theory.

I believe that all perspectives are somehow relevant to my thesis subject as migrant children (and in the case of my research, also adults) do not passively act in the host society but, practice their own agency in one way or another. By doing so, they actively engage in social and cultural processes of the contexts they live in. From constructionist approach, my participants were encountered to the two different cultural aspects of both Iran and Norway as their home and residual country, respectively. Their experiences of differences of social life aspects in these two countries confirm the idea of socially constructed childhoods that differ depending on culture and place. Considering structural point of view, migration affects childhood and adulthood as social and generational units since it brings sets of experiences forward that might shape social structures. In this

regard, integration process is one example of experiences that come along with migration. Neither migration, nor integration cannot be viewed without taking macro-level structures such as policies into consideration.

Moreover, the structural approach could also be helpful in my research to realize that individuals and social structures are not separated from one another, but instead people actively (re)create actions and interactions that connect them to the social structure. Structures on the other hand, are not external to the actions of individuals, but are embedded in the everyday practices. Both these concepts move upon each other. This means that they cannot exist without each other (Giddens, 1984; Tucker, 1998, pp. 84-85). Giddens (1984) also believes that agency and structure are internally connected just like two sides of the same coin. Therefore, it seems rational to dedicate a separate section of this chapter to the concept of agency.

3.2 The Concept of Agency

A pervasive and frequently utilized concept in social studies of children and childhood is agency which means an individual is entitled and capable of active contribution. Agency as Kellett (2012) argues implies activity, a point at which children's perspectives are translated into actions such as decision making, influencing change, and providing evidence. Abebe (2019) pointed out that this concept originates from academic studies (mostly actor-oriented approach) and policymaking by framework of UNCRC (United Nations, 1989). The role children play in societies, as well as their growing generational relations with adults and how these are connected, confirmed the need to "go beyond the simple recognition that children are social actors" (e.g. Wyness, 2013 cited in Abebe, 2019, p.5). Within this line of thinking, Mayall (2002) attempted to elucidate the notion of children's agency by introducing concepts of social actor vs social agent. She argued:

"A social actor does something, perhaps something arising from a subjective wish. The term agent suggests a further dimension: negotiation with others, with the effect that the interaction makes a difference- to a relationship or to a decision, to the workings of a set of social assumptions or constraints" (Mayall, 2002, p.21).

Despite the vast global research done on the concept of agency, some scholars are developing a critical perspective towards it. Alison James (2009) for instance, believes that as a result of children's inter/intra generational positions in society, they would have plenty of opportunities as well as constraints to exercise their agency.

In this regard, Abebe (2019, p.2) in line with Spyrou (2018a) whose vision was that the idea of independent agent child is becoming a restricting trap for researchers in the field, endeavours "to move forward productively in theorising child agency from relational and generational perspectives". In doing so, he criticises the universal viewpoint of agency

which is seen to be something that all children possess as well as the tendency to ignore complicated effects of children's contexts and structures they live in (Abebe, 2019; Tisdall & Punch, 2012). Additionally, he agrees with Durham (2008) that agency cannot be measured as a quantitative variable (as either good or bad) but, is in fact a context-oriented qualitative notion.

Accordingly, instead of asking if a child has agency, we should take a shift to the conceptualization of it and ask what kind of agency a child has, what is the function of the surrounding context and how a child exercises agency through navigation of the context (Durham, 2011 cited in Abebe, 2019, p.6). Abebe (2019) then continues to outline types of child agencies including thick and thin agency (Klocker, 2007), every day and ambiguous agency (Payne, 2012). He also introduces an alternative approach of reconceptualizing agency that are named "agency as a continuum", and "agency as interdependence".

I think for the sake of this research, it is vital to acknowledge the agency of adults, too. Adults may also be called social actors but, just like children, can suffer from restrictions placed on them. Their agency is also shaped by structures as White and Choudhury (2009) suggest. In the present research, I will take advantage of thick/thin agency, agency as continuum and as interdependent which would be more discussed in the section below.

3.2.1 Types of Agency

Berger and Luckmann (1996) noted the critical importance of typification which makes the world much more apprehensible (As cited in Wintersberger, Alanen, Olk, & Qvortrup, 2007). Typified knowledge of everyday life, they believe provides us with a cultural understanding of the structure of lifetime and what to expect from life phases (Ibid). Different types of agency which are useful for my research are the following:

The first types of agency are 'thick' and 'thin agency' that Klocker (2007) has used for her conceptualization of children's agency. She refers to thick agency as a wide range of alternatives and decisions for children which can be enlarged by relationships and contextual factors. In other words, better life conditions are thought to be improved by thick agency. Whereas thin agency is "the decisions and everyday actions of children in highly restricted contexts with few options" (Klocker, 2007, p.85). It seems like relationships and contexts are two sides of the same coin and can act as both "thinners" or "thickers" of agency by shrinking alternatives for children at macro and policy levels or widening them by involving children in local situations (Ansell, 2009). Although the context in which I did my research does not highly impose major restrictions on children, there could still be some limitations upon children from their families for instance, household

responsibilities. Other limitations may largely arise from the need to navigate challenges linked to cultural differences and cultural backgrounds.

The second dimension of agency I used in my study is the notion of agency as a continuum that refers to the fact that agency is not a fixed concept, rather is chiefly negotiated between children and families, as well as families and communities on a regular basis (Abebe, 2019). Abebe sheds light on the argument by Robson, Bell, and Klocker (2007) of agency that children might have or have not agency in several distinct areas of their lives because the contexts in which agency unfolds in, are changing; which means they are constantly moving back and forth along a continuum. Some researchers later agreed that there are some limitations when it comes to the agency in children's everyday lives as agency can sometimes be problematic when applying theoretical ideas into practice. (Tisdall & Punch, 2012). For instance, the situation of child soldiers introduces an ambiguity about whether they are innocent children in need of protection from exploitation, or active agents who should be held accountable for their actions in war. The continued notion of agency is relevant in my study since neither children, nor parents do not have and apply agency similarly in their lives. Both groups encounter different contextual or social limitations in society, family and peer relationships especially as immigrants who are/look different from local community.

Interdependent agency concerns family and intergenerational relationships and focuses on the contexts within which agency reveals itself (Abebe, 2019; Punch, 2015). In other words, depending on who children interact with and the kinds of activities they do, they can be dependent or independent (Esser et al. 2016 cited in Abebe, 2019, p.12). One relevant aspect of this type of agency relies in the impacts of family relationships in how a child contributes in distinct activities like education or migration which is the case of my child participants. For example, how well a child makes friends in a new society could be a result of his/her own efforts as well as parental interventions (Yu, Ostrosky, & Fowler, 2011). But it does not stop here. Interdependent agency also involves the problem-solving techniques used by children in order to manage the expectations and responsibilities (Abebe, 2008) which is again a true story about migrant children.

The third type of agency -interdependent- suits my research since a significant part of a child's everyday life is in connection to parents. Intergenerational relationships among family members may set limitations on their agencies. In an Iranian home, where parents traditionally place certain social and educational expectations on children, the children's freedom of choices shrinks.¹

¹ Evidence that approves this are provided in data analysis chapters, particularly in case of Simin and Minoo who have more religious beliefs.

3.3 Sociology of Family

Family studies is an interdisciplinary research area that benefits from a variety of discourses in history, sociology, anthropology, etc. Many pioneer sociologists such as Max Weber (1922) and Durkheim (1888) have shown interest in the study of families. They considered family as an institutional unit performing different tasks like child-rearing and emotional support (Cited in Naldini, 2017, p.298). Sociology of family was then more developed in 20th century due to the influence of new theoretical approaches that focused more on the family interactions (Ibid).

In family sociology, family is not a natural phenomenon but a social structure; meaning that families (micro level individuals) and societies (macro level factor) are interrelated. Therefore, as Naldini argues (2017, p.299)

"studying different forms of family is an important step toward understanding the way in which different societies and social groups ascribe various meanings to their world, their place in time and space, and their social relationships as they go about organizing their daily lives and establishing bonds and alliance."

The structure of the family also changes itself due to generational relationships and transformations which is a good indicator of social change as some scholars suggest (Elder, 1974, cited in Naldini, 2017, p.300). While families are shaped in the societies they live in, they can also shape and influence those societies. I think this is a key point in my research since immigrant families go under the process of change. At the same time the society they inhabit, changes its foundations to receive them. We can see this specifically, when it comes to integration process which would be discussed later in this chapter. On the other hand, the whole family undergoes the change in terms of child-parent relationships and relationships with the host society. The theory of generational order manifestly articulates and expands above-mentioned points.

3.3.1 Perspectives on Generation and Intergenerational Relationships

Generation is a concept introduced to sociology by Mannheim (1952). He defined generation as a group of people who encounter a set of specific historical, political and cultural events. He then added that such generational group may go further from merely sharing the same viewpoints and start working together for a purpose; for instance, The French Impressionists. He called this a phenomenon a "generational unit". Mannheim's understanding of generation was based on "collective agencies" of the generational unit as social transformers. In such a perspective, youth or adults positively participate in social life whereas children are getting ready for taking over the adult role in the future.

Alanen (2001b) claims that this type of grouping generations, putting them against each other or studying their opinions about the other groups, does little for understanding

children's lives which is the intention of the new paradigm of childhood studies. Alanen and Mayall (2001b) identify three different components about generation. 1- there must be interrelated relationships between children and adults across age divisions, power inequalities plus norms and needs among family members. 2- those relationships are constituted among both social groups of children and adults. 3- adults and children belong to different generations.

Alanen (2001b) also criticizes the age-bounded generational concept and argues that classification of persons based on age, keeps their connections at an "external and contingent" level while a child-parent relationship can be both external and internal. She then brings up a new definition of generation into the social studies of children and childhood which is fairly different. She defines generation -also called generational structure or order- as a relationship system among children and adults who are assigned with different social positions -or in other words are constructed as children and adults- (Alanen, 1992). This system is interrelated and works within social structures of home, school and etc (Alanen, 2001a); The relationships between children and adults are reciprocal but as Morrow (1994) notes, the elements of change should be taken into account in such relationships. In other words, they are interdependent; meaning that "they cannot exist without the other" and "change in one part is tied to the change in the other" (Ibid, p.19). In addition, they keep being negotiating over time and space (Punch, 2001). In Alanen's words this is called "relationality" that might develop more possibilities in researches in the area of social studies of children and childhood (Alanen, 2001b).

Nonetheless, despite Alanen's assumptions for generational order, Mayall (2002) demonstrated how children think sociologically and divide social order into two different groups containing adults and children (non-adults). Additionally, her study revealed that although children act as agents (agency in generational order is discussed in the next section), how adults conceptualize children as incomplete persons, makes them feel disturbed and confused. These two points are in contrast with Alanen's ideal picture of generational order.

3.3.2 Relationality in Generational Order

Alanen (2001b) gives two reasons for why we as researchers in the field of social studies of children and childhood, should follow relational approach. First, if we seek to understand childhood, we must consider the whole set of material, social and discursive process in which childhood is produced and reproduced via generational order. Second, children are not just children; there are other observable aspects of their existence which makes them different in gender, ethnicity and class. Thinking relationality may also influence the methods used in research with children; expanding the research questions to involve adults in children's lives such as parents, grandparents, teachers and peers. Following

relationality thinking, present research emphasis on parents as primary care givers for child participants.

A very crucial part of Alanen's definition of generation regarding children, is the concept of agency (Alanen, 2001b); to understand that children are agents with perspectives about their own everyday lives no matter the social contexts. Agency and power (or lack of power) are connected in a relational perspective. It means that people who possess the positions as children come across some opportunities or restrictions based on the power they have (or have not) and the power which is imposed on them in the form of orders for example. Therefore, in order to do research about children's agency, one should detect positional powers as well (Ibid) since agency encompasses interplays with its contexts (Wintersberger, Alanen, Olk & Qvortrop, 2007).

In this respect, the concept of autonomy pops up which means that no absolute power exists, any power is relative and if children seek to take control or initiative in their lives, they can negotiate it within social positions through resisting the boundaries or challenging parental edicts (Mayall, 1994). Through interrelated relationships between social positions, children not only have the opportunity to exercise their agency and show autonomy (participation right), but also benefit from protection and provision rights; Leisure time, having fun as a child and being free from responsibilities to name a few. Thus, these generational orders (interdependencies) are of great importance in their social life and families play a key role in children's happiness (Alanen & Mayall, 2001a).

Thinking about Norwegian context, as Solberg (1997) suggests, family negotiations happen in many different levels and they contain children's age and age-related activities. Generational order is a vital conceptual lens in the present research since it helps understand how Iranian children and their families navigate their social and family life in the social-cultural context of Norway. However, the child and adult positions in an Iranian family is described differently from a Norwegian family in terms of responsibilities, expectations, etc. Consequently, after migration, internal crises may arise (for example adults put too much pressure on children to follow values of home country).² Although, since these relationships are social-bonded, when parents adjust themselves to local norms and values of host society, the tensions lessen. This is the proof for both Morrow's point that change in one end of the relationship, causes change in another and also Alanen's concept of relationality.

Additionally, I witnessed the talk of power and agency in family settings when children used their voice to get what they wanted or negotiate things with parents. Parents on the

² As seen in the case of Simin and Minoo in data analysis chapters.

other hand, used agency in everyday life situations in the society as immigrants, as well as their power on children to set restrictions/opportunities on them.

3.4 Integration to the New Society

Whatever phenomena that deals with social behaviour is difficult to define due to the floating essence of it. Integration is one of them and the reason behind its complexity refers to the fact that it incorporates not only migrants, but also host societies as well as social processes in between them (Werth, Delfs, & Stevens, 1997).

In 1993, Böhning and Werner (As cited in Werth et al., 1997) introduce a range of various concepts of integration varying from multiculturalism to full assimilation and even segregation. They each have their own definitions which overlap to a great deal. For instance, some would consider "assimilation" and integration to be synonyms. Assimilation suggests that a migrant gives up their background and takes up new norms and values from the new host society in order to adapt to it. This way of thinking makes the definition and measurement of integration even more challenging because as Werth, Stevens and Delfs (1997) point out, meeting the requirements for "multicultural coexistence" is easier than requirements for completely melting in a new environment. For the sake of this research, I decided to stick with the term "integration" for keeping consistency in the text.

Moreover, I would like to take the definition that Berit Berg (1997 cited in Werth et al., 1997) loaned from Swedish sociologist, Jose Alberto Diaz who noted:

We define and describe integration in relation to the complex participation of the immigrant in more-or-less organized and also institutionalized fields of social, economic, occupational, residential and communicative systems of social action in the host society... Full integration into the host society, for example, implies a state of complete similarity between immigrants and native people in their participation in the socially regulated distribution of valuable resources (Diaz 1995, p. 202).

It is vital for everyone to acknowledge that integration is a process which involves both migrants and host societies. Its essence is far from being a "one-way-street"; implying a cooperation between two parties is required for immigrants to accomplish integration goals, since natives' attitudes and behaviours are decisive by either directly or indirectly influencing migrants' efforts to better integration. If people for whatever reason fail to have equal opportunities to participate in the society, have little or no access to critical capabilities to integrate themselves, the result would be "social exclusion" (Sen, 1992 cited in Klasen, 2001, p.419).

Identically, if efforts do not apply adequately, there would be "parallel social systems" in the host society containing migrants who live in their own "bubbles" without serious

connections to the society (Werth et al., 1997). Reynolds (2008) argues that migrant children usually befriend either children who speak their first language, or international children who have the same social positions as them. This parallel community Reynold affirms (Ibid), provides them with a sense of comfort and positive social experiences. However, this "migrant cultural bubble", makes children isolated causing a fail to integration into the home society. I think the same thing could be said about adults. People would grow negative perspectives about host society if they have limited interactions with them. This is the case of many participants of this study (mostly adults) who refused/failed to mingle with Norwegians. So, over the years, they developed negative perspectives about Norwegians that in a way reinforce the stereotypes about locals such as being insensitive or unfriendly.

During integration process, both children and parents feel the pressure to actively engage themselves in the local community. Weisskirch (2010) argues that even though parents are the main responsible figures in the household, sometimes children perform a significant role by taking the task of "language brokering" or as some researchers call it "parentification". It means that children communicate with other individuals or governmental authorities on behalf of their parents and are "emotionally or behaviourally responsible for the parent" (Peris et al. 2008 cited in Weisskirch, 2010, p.69). Previous studies demonstrate both positive (better academic performance and self-efficiency) and negative effects (stress and burden of obligation) of such role on children (Dorner et al. 2007; Buriel et al. 1998; Weisskirch and Alva 2002; Wu and Kim 2009, as cited in Weisskirch, 2010). In situations such as migration where children contribute to family crisis and parents acknowledge their participation, parentification is adaptive (Weisskirch, 2010) since it assists the child to grow personally.

There are child participants in this research who played the role of language brokering in families. Although it was a demanding task for them, in the long run it helped them acquire the Norwegian language better. Besides, their parents were brought to the integration process using the help of their own children.

3.4.1 Dimensions of Integration

One must bear in mind that no matter what the definition of integration applies, it is a multidimensional phenomenon. Integration is initially divided into two segments of structural and internal integration. Structural integration means ethnic equality which entails immigrants participate in the economic, social and political life of the host society, while their own culture and ethnicity are acknowledged. Internal integration on the other hand centres its focus on the host society's own cultural identity and perseverance (Werth et al., 1997).

Structural approach ponders four dimensions of integration including social, economic and cultural role migrants play in their new environment. The fourth dimension that refers back to political activities of migrants such as freedom of expressing beliefs, is pretty much dependent on whether the host government recognizes and grants their participation rights. In the following part, I give examples of each.

Social integration includes binational friendships, housing or social status. Cultural dimension is truly a challenging one. The reason is the complication with the term culture and the aspects we attach to it. Nonetheless, language, music and religion are categorized as cultural elements of integration. (Werth et al., 1997). Economic dimension takes unemployment rate and educational attainment into consideration (Werth et al., 1997). Last but not least, political dimension contains racial harassment and attacks, political participation and discrimination (Ibid). All these dimensions should be taken into account if one seeks to fully understand integration.

Muss (1997 as cited in Werth et al., 1997) has an interesting view towards integration dimensions. He divides European concepts of integration in three elements. First element is "the relation between the cultural aspects of the public and private domain" (Werth et al., 1997, p.33). These include assimilation, integration, multiculturalism and segregation that I discussed above. Second one is the extent to which immigrants experience inclusion/exclusion in noncultural aspects of the host society containing policies (residence rights, voting rights, etc), as well as socio-economic status of them (language, education, labour market, etc). The last element is migrants' role in the process of integration. He concluded that these three elements might lead to integration policies in governmental levels (Ibid). These approaches are advantageous for data analysis in present research.

3.5 Summary

This chapter illustrates the theoretical framework of the thesis that benefit the data analysis in terms of giving meaning to the findings of the present research. Three perspectives of social studies of children and childhood which have a close connection to the concept of agency are described in this chapter. Agency and types of it are relevant for both child and adult participants in terms of effecting family relationships. Through the lens of generational order theory, the alterations in family settings that happen due to migration can be unravelled. The topic of migration is also close to the integration theory which is discussed in the last part of the chapter and explains how immigrants and the host society adapt to the processes of change.

Chapter Four: Methodology

This chapter aims to present the research strategies and design. It begins with a general definition of qualitative methods. Then, I reflect upon some important fieldwork implications such as how I entered the field, sampling process and field notes that happened to be quite valuable for data analysis and further in writing process.

The next part of this chapter delineates study's chosen methods in depth followed by a reflection of ethical issues. The last part of the chapter outlines the challenges and methodological limitations of the research as well as the role I had as an insider researcher.

4.1 Qualitative Methods

This study aims to realize what participants (children and their parents) think about social aspects of life and integration in Norway. I was interested in gaining participants lived experiences of the social setting they live in. As McCracken (1988) points out, qualitative research methods are used in order to discover how respondents see the world. In this regard, I have chosen to utilise individual and focus-group discussions as well as essay writing to collect the information. I believe that chosen qualitative research methods may provide me with the required information because they offer the researcher the opportunity to explore both the research setting and participants' behaviours and subjects in details (Bryman, 2016).

Utilizing more than one qualitative method is for the purpose of enhancing effectivity of the research methods (Boyden & Ennew, 1997; Flick, 2008). Scholars argue that although it might be challenging to do so, using more methods can lead to cross checking of information; meaning that one topic or issue would be touched upon several times as the researcher and participants get back to it through different methods (Boyden & Ennew, 1997). As a result, I chose to use various methods in order to facilitate triangulation in my study.

4.2 Participatory Method

Children in childhood studies are appraised as beings and not becomings. This vision implies giving them a voice in research; meaning we should use research methods that emphasizes children's agency, knowledge, interests and interpretations. No other method could guarantee this more than participatory approach. Clark (2010, p.33), argues that by using such an approach, researcher applies multiple methods to "enable children and adults to be active participants in the research rather than (to) depend on the researcher becoming an active participant in the research participants' lives". In participatory research methods, one takes traditional methods of doing research like interviews and observation along with more child-friendly methods like drawings, writings, photographs etc, so that children's voices and perspectives of their lives are heard (Punch, 2002).

Children have the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings through various methods that do not necessarily require them to verbally participate. This approach is more inclusive than other methods and provides a deeper understanding for the researchers (Clark, 2005). I chose to use participatory approach in my study to give participants, especially children, a wider choice for expressing themselves.

Throughout the fieldwork, I tried to clarify to the children that I am there to voice their opinions, that their input is valuable for my research no matter what it is or how they choose to deliver it using any of the three alternative methods. On one occasion, for instance, a child participant felt more comfortable discussing her opinions about the topic of conversation in the individual interview and not in the focus group discussion.

4.3 Field Entry

This study carried out over a period of three months from August 2019 to October 2019. The place of study was Trondheim, Norway. I started to search for participants in the beginning of summer 2019 and initially planned to finish my field work during summer. However, most people whom I reached out to, were on summer holidays. Consequently, field work was postponed to August.

After summer holidays, I called mothers and had short informal meetings with them in different places based on their preferences. I described my research title, questions, purpose and they requested to talk to their families and get back to me with an answer. I believe that I could gain their trust and acceptance since most of them were students in Norway years ago and could connect to the position I have now. However, another factor which I think was essential for me getting accepted by Iranian families was the fact that I was introduced to them through a mutual friend whom they have great respect for.

4.4 Sampling Procedure

Snowball method was used in this study; I contacted one Iranian acquaintance who has been living in Trondheim for over 15 years and has numerous contacts with other Iranian families. She was informed of the title, process and the requirements of the research and agreed to both participate and help me around with finding other possible participants. Thus, I received phone numbers of Iranian families living in Trondheim. They were also contacted and had a short meeting with me, conversations with their family members (often mothers) were held and they agreed to participate to the research. The whole process of getting participant's consent, especially from children, was different from the ideal procedure of asking all the participants individually.

It is assumed that the researcher gets the consent from all the participants individually, but it did not happen in this research. When families were contacted, the whole family as a unit announced their participation. I asked to speak to the children as well in particular

but was told this is not necessary, and children would also join the study. Children themselves did not disagree with the families' decision in joining the research either.

This process basically happened based on my expectations for it is normal in the Iranian family unit that everybody agrees with what care givers decide. However, this is not totally the same as what happens inside the country as a result of families' experiences of living in Norway for years. Children were told about the research mainly through their parents, but they were not forced to accept to participate. However, the truth is that none of the children failed to satisfy their parents by announcing their consent for participating after all.

Consent was taken both orally and written from the participants prior to the beginning of the fieldwork. Interviews and other gathering data methods were utilized afterwards.

A total number of 9 families, 27 people were interviewed including 10 children (3 boys and 7 girls) and 17 parents. Most families were consisted of parents with 1 or 2 children but those children who were older than 18 years old were not included in the research. There was an exception for one single mother who was interviewed alongside her child. The reason why the number of the boy participants is smaller, simply lies in the fact that the families tend to have more girls than boys; all eligible boys were included and accepted to participate in the research.

For the purpose of the research -which was interviewing participants and asking for an essay writing (particularly from children)-, the age limit was restricted to be 10 years old and above because children were expected to fully understand what I ask, be able to verbalize their opinions and have an active role during the whole process of gathering data. As for parents, there was not an age limit; having lived in Norway for some years and parenting a child aged between 10 to 18 were the criteria for parents to become eligible for the research. The parents' ages varied from 39 to 51 years old, mostly highly educated who have at least Master's degrees from Iranian or Norwegian universities and sometimes both, running full-time jobs; (except for some mothers who have part-time jobs).

Among child participants, three of them were born in Iran and experienced living there for the first years of their lives. This was in fact reflected in the way they explained living in Norway. Also, the amount of attachment to the country of origin was considerably different among these two children comparing to the rest of them who were born here.

The majority of these families moved to Norway around 15 to 20 years ago to study for a master's or PhD degree and then decided to stay here. Thus, one can conclude that they mainly have the same family and life status. However, as I mentioned above, there are

some families whose situation is not anything close to this. For example, two families were living in Turkey and Greece for 5 and 10 years, respectively before coming to Norway as refugees, another family just moved to Norway 3 years ago following the father who came here to study and now has found a full-time job in a company. So, one can say that the sample was different and yet homogenous at the same time.

4.5 Filed Notes

Although I did not use filed notes as a data collection method, since day one of the fieldwork, I took notes of the initial thoughts I had before, during or after interviews and how they unfolded for me. Especially when interviews were being held inside participants' homes, I found it quite interesting to observe and write down their family interactions. "Field notes are written explanations or data taken, often by multiple observers at a single event, capturing interactions of interest to the larger topic under study" (E. A. James, Milenkiewicz, & Bucknam, 2008, p.74). Regarding interviews and data gathering phase, participants were not willing in getting their voices recorded. Therefore, I started taking notes while conducting interviews. Therefore, data transcription was not an option in the present study.

I had to balance my writing with their speech speed which was not an easy task and could have affected my eye contact or reciprocal conversations with them. That is why I decided to take a different notebook and try to write down my impressions of every data gathering method. So, I wrote everything down -from the details or changes of participant behaviour following a question or their body language- as soon as each session terminated to the degree my memory served me. Filed notes were helpful when I was analysing the data by refreshing my memory of the most important details and happenings throughout the fieldwork.

4.6 Choosing to Work with Parents and Children

In the domain of childhood studies, children are considered as qualified research participants with skills and qualifications that deserve to be studied in their own right, independent from adults' concerns and perspectives (James and Prout, 1990) and it is therefore important to listen to children's voices especially in the matters that affect their lives (UNCRC). However, it is significant to value the perspectives of all stakeholders in children's lives including their parents. In other words, as Spyrou (2018b, p.28) argues, it is productive for childhood studies to adapt to a more "relational" thinking which means to "expand the networks of relations and associations which link children to other humans and non-humans across multiple spatial and temporal scales". One can therefore conclude that decentering the child approach as suggested by Spyrou (2017) by incorporating everyone who has a stake on childhood, might help with painting a bigger and better picture of children's lives.

Accordingly, I believe that although children are important “beings” worth acquiring the attention they have now, neglecting the fact that they still live with adults (parents or other care-givers) and are under direct influence of the family environment and interactions, could result in less precise data. Therefore, I voluntarily included parents as well as children to avoid excluding the key roles of parents and families as a unit. I trust that as a result of focusing on both children and adults, this study goes beyond the mere domain of childhood studies which can ultimately offer a new way of thinking to open up “the possibilities for understanding our object of study through a relational lens” (Spyrou, 2017, p.434). Such reflections can also be an advantage for the research because they inform us about one topic from different angles; both an external relationship viewpoint (children and parents with Norwegian context) and an internal one (family interaction), intra- and inter-generationally as Spyrou calls it (Ibid). Also, engagement with expanded new issues may offer “possibilities for political alignments and re-alignments with diverse actors and agendas ...” (Ibid, p.435).

This means that the results may depict both sides of one phenomenon at the same time. This two-level perspective disentangles different opinions gathered from different participants from each other and enables us to acquire more accurate information about how Iranian families navigate the system in Norway, how they maintain the important relationships on different levels with different individuals and last but not least, how the family dynamics work in family situations.

4.7 Methods

Multiple different data collection methods were used in this study including focus group discussions, individual in-depth semi-structure interviews with informants, essay writing by children - and informal dialogues - to enhance the overall quality and validity of the study findings, this is called triangulation which helps get richer, fuller data and/or to confirm the results of the research (Wilson, 2014). Triangulation also “... increases scope, depth and consistency in methodological proceedings” (Flick, 2002, p.227). These methods seem to be complementary because if there is a missing data somewhere that has been overlooked by the researcher, it would be covered by the other methods since we came back to the topics a couple of times using different methods. Accordingly, a more comprehensive and delicate picture of the topic and participants is obtained.

Most of the interview discussions carried out in participants’ own properties but some individual interviews, especially the ones with children were done in cafes considering that children were more comfortable outdoors. Interviews were conducted in Persian and later translated into English by the researcher to be able to be utilized in present study. I used my pre-provided interview guides and questions; however, these questions were not fully structured. I designed questions beforehand with the goal to remind myself to go through

all research objectives and follow a reasonable direction during the interviews. But I chose to use semi-structured interviews because I believe they are more flexible and offer participants the chance to lead the interviews and answer research questions in a way “they” think is most important.

4.7.1 Focus Group Discussions

A total number of 18 group discussions were held during fieldwork that happened in two phases, first both parents and then parents with children. Most of the questions in focus group discussions focused on participants’ family exchanges after moving to Norway; how they handled the situations at home, and generally speaking, how their family dynamics have changed during their years of living here. In the case of children, I was more interested to know how they feel about originally coming from a different culture, what their experience of living in an Iranian-Norwegian home is and how this “difference” has affected them in daily life.

Regarding focus group discussions, I had interviews with both parents followed by meetings with all family members (except for younger or older children who were not part of the research). This order was decided based on my idea to use notes from interviews with parents in the bigger group discussion. In addition, I thought since most of the children were meeting me for the first time, they would have been more comfortable answering my questions in their parents’ presence leading to a more fluent one-to-one conversation afterwards.

I also felt that interviews that happened in the participants’ homes were more productive. They took longer time than the ones outdoors. I was able to watch participants in their own home settings which gave them a sense of familiarity which I think can be beneficial especially with children and how I was able to develop a rapport with them. This is not to suggest that outdoor interviews were not helpful. Rather, the background noise made it easier for us to be distracted. Besides, participants were in rush to head back home from our appointment whereas when I met them at their homes, they seemed not to worry about the time much.

Another benefit of focus group discussions for my study lies in the fact that I did not have the opportunity to do participant observation. Thus, by going into participants’ homes and watching their family dynamic and interactions, (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984) especially non-verbal reactions, I was able to form a much better image of my participants. However, at some points during interviews with parents both group and individual discussions, I felt that they do not finish their sentences or suddenly change the subject in the middle of answering what they have started talking about. This could have had several reasons: for instance, it could be because the conversation topic was sensitive to speak about, or that

one of the parents did not feel comfortable to explicitly disagree with their spouse in front of a so-called stranger.

As multiple interviews offer the researcher the opportunity to go through all research questions several times, I was hoping that having individual interviews following focus group discussions, would give children the time to think more about the questions and provide more precise answers by revisiting previous conversations; allowing me to get the most details possible (Clark, 2010). Clark goes on adding that "some children will only respond to interview questions if asked in a group session, whilst others will only answer if asked in a one-to-one situation" (Ibid, p. 34).

4.7.2 Individual Semi-structured Interviews

Qualitative interview as a method gives the best access to peoples' basic experience of the lived world. Qualitative interview seeks knowledge from the expressions of everyday language. However, it requires precise description and specificity of experiences and feelings (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). To this matter, I conducted individual in-depth interview with 10 child participants including 3 boys and 7 girls.

Interview guides and questions (both open and closed-ended ones) were used as a way to explore the research topic in a greater depth as they helped me to focus on my main questions as well as participants to elaborate on their experiences of the topic. Individual interviews took place with children themselves after parents' interviews and focus group discussions because I desired that the children feel more comfortable in my presence. Moreover, I used my notes of their own ideas and examples to conduct the interview by asking them follow-up and open-ended clarifying questions taken from their lived experiences. That way, I succeeded to build a rapport with them quite easily which helped them to share their stories with me. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p.193) describe a good participant as truthful, precise, coherent, not contradicting themselves and sticking to the interview topic. So, it was very important for me to win the child participants' trust if I wanted to gather better data.

Interviewing children who came to Norway at an older age was a bit different from the ones who were born and raised here. I had to change some questions to adjust to the different experiences of my child participants. For instance, the question of what children think of living in Iran is irrelevant for those who have actually never lived there. Nevertheless, the questions about their experiences (challenges) living in Norway as a foreigner, or how they feel about social interactions were common between the two groups.

The age cut-off for my research was 10 years old but since most children who participated in the research were older than 12 years old, neither me nor them had severe issues in

having a conversation or conveying our messages. However, it is worth mentioning that since most child participants were born and raised in Norway, with an exception for three of them, their Persian language skills were not as developed as their Norwegian language skills, however they somehow managed to participate. There were times when they did not completely understand the meaning of a question or needed more clarification. In those type of situations, I would translate my words and phrases into English for them which was considered the second common language between me and the children. The reason why I did not speak Norwegian in these situations was not being fully competent in my Norwegian language skills that could result in making the children confused.

4.7.3 Essay Writing

Essay writing is a method in which the researcher gives the participants one or more topics to write their ideas, feelings and experiences about. Initially, I thought of asking the children to write diaries. But I changed my mind; I had plenty of reasons for this decision. First, diaries require children to write about their daily routines, feelings and events that happened to them. This could be a fantastic source of information, but my child participants were not able to write in Persian except for two of them. I could have asked them to write in Norwegian or English, but it could not be very helpful either because I am not a sophisticated Norwegian speaker/reader. Additionally, not all children could speak and write well in English. As a result, they would be uncomfortable, and I did not want to leave them under much pressure. Second reason was that I started data gathering in summer holidays that is the time to relax and enjoy free time for children. They would not be willing to take time and keep a daily diary. In addition, the parents were not very satisfied with the diary idea because of the same reason. So, I changed it to essay writing.

I asked children to write an essay about their experiences of being an Iranian/Norwegian child in Norwegian society. My goal was to realize how coming from a different background and having an obviously different appearance would influence children's personal lives at school, among peers, etc. Even though I gave the children a topic to write about, I tried to be flexible with it as to give the children the freedom to include any specific key issue they want to address. Being flexible as Leyshon (2002) argues is necessary in the research in order for the researcher to adopt with subtle or not-subtle interactions with children, parents, etc.

Those two children who went to school before moving overseas, did not have any problems doing the task. For the rest, we came up with a substitute solution for writing essays. I asked children if they like to write their essays in Persian language but with Latin alphabet (Persian language utilizes Arabic alphabet which is hard to learn for those who never learnt it at school). This is in fact a popular way of communicating for lots of Iranians inside or outside the country and gives the ones who cannot use the standard alphabet letters, an

opportunity to write in a so-called “penglish” way. My suggestion was accepted by the children although it was not easy for all of them. However, they managed to do the task.

I found this method to be a useful one because it let children to write in any desirable shape or form. There was not a specific structure to follow or a specific question to answer. Some of them for instance, included examples to clarify their points while others tended to have a more general style. At the end, I could see the world directly from the children’s own perspectives without any interventions and that is the best thing about using a child-friendly method in research.

4.7.4 Informal Dialogues

Dialogue is defined by Franco (2006, p.814) as a means to “jointly create meaning and shared understanding through conversation”. Dialogues can take place in a natural setting when two or more people engage in a normal talk. Thus, “not all dialogues require a method” (McDonald, Bammer, & Deane, 2009, p.2). Using “culturally creditable” methods lets participants to feel free in taking about their narratives (iLeyshon, 2002). Leyshon argues that creating a safe and convenient atmosphere and good management of the group dynamics by the researcher, can lead to have in-depth conversations about the topics that have not been discussed or addressed before (Ibid).

Accordingly, I used informal dialogues from the very first day of conducting my study. More often when I called mothers to introduce myself and afterwards when having short meetings with them to describe my study, they showed interest in the title and started opening up about it. These conversations were so spontaneous that I often forgot to ask for their consent to enter them in my data collection or write them down after I got back home. Informal dialogues may be perceived as friendly chats and might lead to forgetting the need to continuously request consent (Hart & Tyrer, 2006). However, after a while I asked for participants’ consent to reflect upon our informal chats.

At the end of data gathering phase, I was almost familiar with all these families and had the chance to be invited to some gatherings where most often parents and older children were participating. Sometimes they talked about my research and shared their experiences together which again was a good source of information for me because I was offered an opportunity to revisit my data and add any missed or neglected information. Of course, this time I remembered to ask for their consent.

4.8 Data Analysis

I took Braun & Clarke’s suggestion (2006) in considering six steps to analyse the data. One needs to move back and forth among the steps to achieve the goal of interpretation. The steps are as followed:

1-familiarizing yourself with your data, 2- generating initial codes, 3- searching for themes, 4- reviewing themes, 5- defining and naming themes, 6- producing the report.

I read and re-read the generated data to familiarize myself with the information searched for distinguishable patterns, similarities and differences all at the same time (Ennew & Abebe, 2009) to find answers to my research initiative questions using the six steps. This study is inductive in the sense that data was used to shed light on how the research outline would be regarding choice of theories. My aim was to make sure data analysis and theories fit well together.

4.9 Ethical Considerations

4.9.1 Confidentiality

Confidentiality entails researcher's efforts to keep participants identities and information safe from any recognition. Any disclosure or data revealing mistakes are not acceptable. Some scholars state that anonymity "is one form of confidentiality" that tries to keep participants' identities a secret" (Saunders, Kitzinger, & Kitzinger, 2015, p.617). In this research, confidentiality was as important as viral because Trondheim is such a small city and Iranian community in particular, is not so big. Given the fact that snowball sampling method was used to find participants, most of them already knew other families who were participating in my research. Snowball method is known to be particularly vulnerable to the risk of recognition participant identities. Therefore, Saunders et al. (2015) suggested to use two different pseudonyms for names and places so that any recognizable contribution is hidden.

I did not use two pseudonyms, however, I guaranteed my participants that all the data would be anonymous and tried my best to keep participants' information away from anyone else's accessibility by keeping the written and digital data (list of families, individuals and their information) in a personal closet and computer. I also used a coding system; each person and each family were given a specific code (a combination of letters and numbers) trying not to use any names or information that would have make the data recognizable.

4.9.2 Informed Consent

Informed consent is defined as informing research participants about the study, risks and benefits they may encounter during the research. It has a great significance because it helps participants to both learn about the study and their rights to withdraw or continue with it (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015). As Coady (2001 cited in Harcourt & Conroy, 2005, p.569) has discussed, to prevent participants from being "victims of the research" or shifting the benefits of the research to the researcher rather than the participants,

participant consent -or informed assent in the case of participants who has not reached the age of consent (children)- is absolutely essential (Ibid).

As researchers we have the duty to totally inform our possible participants about the content of study including research questions and methods we aim to use in addition to the complete study procedure. There is also a need to acknowledge participants' informed dissent which is defined as the opportunity of the participant to say no to our invitation as active agents of their own lives (Bourke & Loveridge, 2014).

When doing research with children, something else that is of great importance is "who" gives consent for them; is it going to be a parent or a caregiver or the children themselves. This turned out to be a challenge for me because ideally, I planned to gain consent of both parents and children separately but as I described earlier, parents agreed to participate on behalf of all family members and children themselves seemed to be fine with it.

4.9.3 Asymmetrical Power

Interview might be one of the most popular data collection methods, but it is not as simple and straight forward as it may seem. One of the challenges of using interviews lies in power imbalance between interviewer and interviewees especially when conducting research with children. As researchers decide for the place, content and procedure, participants and children particularly might feel left out or unpowered although as Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) suggest, researchers do not exercise power intentionally, this still might happen due to the nature of the situation.

Doing research with children, one should be fully aware of the power asymmetry that reveals itself in the everyday contexts of children's lives. Though power imbalance is more obvious in case of "vulnerable" children such as left-behind children, it does not mean that there was zero power imbalance in my research. Hill (2005) suggests that there are still differences between children and adults that might bring power imbalance to the research such as the ability to take responsibility for children and the power that an adult has over a child due to generational relationships (Mayall, 2002).

I had interviews with children who were born or raised in Norway. As a result, they were pretty much aware of their rights to cooperate or not whenever they wanted to. Nonetheless, sometimes I felt the pressure on the children when they found it hard to speak Persian to me. I would give them time to think or maybe reformulate their sentences, say it in English or even leave the topic but I believe they wanted to impress me or not let me down by trying harder. This I think could also be an instance of ta'arof that I described in background chapter. Additionally, I intended to make children more comfortable around myself by meeting them in their home settings for the first time with presence of their parents.

Interviews with parents, however, were tricky. As all adult participants were older than me and I was interviewing them mostly in their own homes, the power imbalance seemed to be in their favour; meaning that they felt themselves in a power position over a young researcher who came to their home seeking information to write her master thesis. I, on the other hand, had to be fully respectful and receptive of parents' power positions at their home following ta'arof culture. In this context, Ansell (2001, p.103) suggests:

The field is not (...) a scene apart from the discourses of age, race and gender through which power is exercised. The researcher cannot perform a neutral role, but inevitably participates in the (re)production of power relations in the field.

Nonetheless, as soon as I started to have informal conversations with parents introducing myself and talking about my background, we bonded, and they felt more comfortable. Thus, power imbalance was not a big issue in this research.

4.10 Challenges and Limitations of the Research

One of the limitations that this study might have faced, refers back to post filed work phase, when adult participants chose to include other topics in their answers or highlight some details that would not seem to be very important in my opinion during data collection. Although I tried to be open about interviews and follow semi-structured interview guides, I am still not completely sure if I was totally unbiased and inclusive of all participants answers. I wonder if I possibly dropped some significant information due to not asking more follow-up questions. In that case it seems like as an insider to the Iranian culture, I already had some answers for my research questions and unconsciously was looking for information that can confirm my own ideas. My taken-for-granted opinions could have led to loss of significant moments when the interviews could have been more fruitful by asking follow-up clarifying questions.

One challenge for me was how to phrase sensitive questions and avoid participants being resistance to answer. Some parents especially seemed not wanting me to know if there are any malfunctions or anything far from perfect in their lives. For example, when asked about how families would handle or manage the challenges when their children were getting older, the most common answer was that all family members discussed the issue and found a solution together or let the children decide for themselves. Although, this could be true, it could not perfectly happen all the time. Parents avoided talking about times when they were unable to find a solution or when their child decided to do something they did not approve of. A follow-up question here was answered by "well ... yes ... sometimes it happens" and then quickly adding "but we make it work all the time". They hardly mentioned the details of how they worked the disagreements out.

Chances are high that families would have opened up easier if the researcher is close to a family and already knows them. This happened in one of the interviews with a family who knew me from before. They included lots of details and examples in their responses. However, it seemed that even this family had a border for how much information is "fine" to be closed. In one occasion for instance, when their child was talking about how challenges of migrating to Norway influenced the family, the mother stopped her from talking at some point and reminded her that "you should think twice before saying stuff because some stuff better be kept inside a family" which is a proverb in Persian language, as well.

I also faced the language problem which was discussed above. This was a challenge for me and might have influenced the information provided by children. Although I tried my best to make sure children understood what the questions and their meanings were, there is a chance not all of them had recognized the exact content of some conversations. This was less than a challenge when having focus group discussions with families since whenever children had difficulties understanding me, their parents clarified my questions for them.

In addition, I interviewed parents together because it would be a time-consuming process to interview them individually, but I believe that data would have been richer if there was a possibility to do so. In that case, I could have asked questions from each parent individually. It might have been interesting to realize if data collected would be any different if parents could also have individual interviews.

4.11 Researcher's Role as an Insider

From the beginning of the research, I was aware of the researcher role I had to follow. This was crucial to remind myself to continue with this role to keep a "professional distance" from participants since it is common in Iranian culture to get close to others quite fast. Katz (1994) points out, the research, the researcher and the researched are tightly bound together and the boundaries become redefined and continuously blurred during fieldwork. I personally felt a sense of joy being in an environment where everybody spoke my mother tongue, a home decorated in a very much Iranian style and I shared this moment with the families who were hosting me. They on the other side, were curious to know me better on a deeper level by asking me detail questions. I enjoyed the bond I had with them but at the same time, I tried to keep the balance of not getting too private or close while remaining friendly. The bonding of researcher and participants is not a negative point in its essence in my idea, but it could lead to a not professional undesirable relationship between them which does not help with the research process.

Balancing the role of a friendly and yet professional researcher was particularly important when interviewing adults and specially those who I knew from before. It was less of a challenge for me when interviewing children because our age difference and their life histories of being an Iranian/Norwegian child left little common characteristics between us. Albeit, as a researcher I should have still taken care of this issue because children are normally more vulnerable than adults and have marginalized position in adult society (Punch, 2002).

The other considerable issue I faced in my role as a researcher, was the insider/outsider role. It seemed like my position kept changing back and forth in different situations. On one hand, as an Iranian, I was aware of the cultural matters which are somehow influential in every Iranian family no matter where they live. On the other hand, I witnessed the ways families changed their interconnections as a result of experiencing life in another culture that is the complete opposite of the country of origin in many ways. For example, not eating pork is very common among lots of Iranians (mostly because of religious beliefs) even if they have been living outside Iran for years. Likewise, lots of adult participants do not eat pork but they never told their children anything about Muslims not eating pork. Most of the children were raised freely to choose whatever they desired.

Although I totally agree with giving children the freedom to think and choose, I was still surprised to see how family dynamics are similar or different to the Iranian culture in many different ways. In those situations, I was an outsider who was learning new things about the community under the study and in other situations, things were the same or happened in the way I expected them to. For instance, almost all families criticised Norwegians for inviting other children to their homes and not giving them food or in their words "not being responsible enough". According to my knowledge, it is not such a big problem for Norwegians themselves but surprisingly, Iranian children agreed with their parents by saying they would not go to those friend's homes anymore because they did not behave respectfully. This in my idea is yet another example of exaggerated beliefs in ta'arof culture that seem to pass along between generations even outside of the country.

Thereupon, I learned to question my taken-for-granted assumptions about "the Iranian family unit" I had in my mind before the study. Recent points prove how complicated it is when different cultures and generations meet, and how difficult it is to examine all these layers. Therefore, it is of great importance that researcher is continuously aware and reflexive of the details and maintain the balance between personal knowledge and experience and those of participants.

One of the most interesting issues I faced while doing this research, was that participants' behaviour and thoughts, were also "in-between" Iranian and Norwegian culture. The

questions here is what makes a person choose which collective characteristics they alter or keep when exposing to different alternatives in a new place. This is the question I will try to answer in other chapters.

4.12 Summary

In this chapter, I have first elaborated issues such as field entry, sampling procedure and other implications of the fieldwork. Then, the methodological approaches used to gather data are presented followed by the ethical concerns and challenges of the research. At the end of the chapter, I reflected upon my experience inside the field and how I kept the balance of my roles as a professional researcher and an insider who knew some participants from before.

Chapter Five: Analysis of Data Regarding Children's Perspectives about Family Life and Social Integration

In this chapter, I would go through the data gathered from the fieldwork with children. The aim of the chapter is to learn about experiences of Iranian children living in Trondheim about social life and integration concept in Norway. First, I will indicate the type of challenges child participants referred to as migrants/foreigners, as well as the procedures that helped them merge with the Norwegian society. As in one part of the chapter, I reflect upon the effects of the challenges on the children's lives including child-parent relationships, academic performance, etc. The last two sections of the chapter present the advantages and disadvantages of living in Norway through the children's viewpoints, respectively.

Before beginning data analysis, I believe it is important to mention that in my idea, there is a difference between the experiences of children who were born or raised in Norway and those who moved to Norway at an older age since their responses to study questions are different depending on their life situations. While the former group expressed more positive viewpoints towards life in Norway, the latter seemed to be involved with their families' struggles, resulting in more negative views. This point of view will be more discussed in the present chapter. Accordingly, I applied the same categorization for the first and second sections as a) children who were born or raised in Norway and b) children who came to Norway at an older age.

5.1. Challenges for Children who Were Born or Raised in Norway

As I mentioned above, children's experiences are quite different regarding challenges. Generally speaking, the children who were born or raised here from an early age have more similar opinions in comparison to the other group. I interpreted the data gathered from them as, since their families were almost settled down by the time they were born or started to realize their surroundings, they were not under as much pressure as the second group. Most challenges they mentioned considered figuring out their identity as an Iranian/Norwegian individual and the stress arising from it. Hybridity or cultural blending is what most of these children do. It is the process in which children apply their agency to "combine different cultural expressions into something new, becoming competent navigators of culture" (Jacobsen, 2002, p.32). Therefore, as Back (2008, p.446) describes immigrant children usually have "one foot in two cultures" that means they live in a space between two cultures. Sima, born in Norway said:

I was born in an Iranian home in Norway. It was a bit hard to realize who I am. I was not completely like Norwegians, but I was one of them anyways. It was hard.

The differences in food, language and traditions are among the reasons that challenge the children the most since according to Sima, keeping up with them is time and energy consuming. Some of the children like Darya using her agency tried to conceal the differences. She said:

*I wanted to decrease this distance. I wanted to dress and talk like Norwegians.*³

Present data describes that being different from the majority of local community is an enormous challenge for children. I think this could be particularly exigent if the local community does not welcome the difference. Although this was not the experience of all the child participants, those who suffered from this challenge had difficulty prevailing over it. Rysst (2017, p.181) came across one child participant in her study who did not like to "stand out" from Norwegians. No matter how hard this child tried, she was described by other children as *almost Norwegian*; it means sometimes in the native Norwegian group and sometimes out. This could be a "tough" position to be as Rysst suggests (p. 181) and I interpreted my child participants to be somehow in the same position.

Maybe the fear of judgment is what makes some children like Nora, also born and raised in Norway, feel the pressure of being different:

It doesn't matter if you ARE a Norwegian because you were born here. You are judged because you're different. You should be strong and not lose your hope. You'll find friends after a while.

Nora points to an interesting matter that Rysst (2017) outlined in her study. She found out that ethnic Norwegian children agree that people do not always believe what they say and that they do not always accept immigrant origin children as *full Norwegians*. More interestingly, hybrid participants in Rysst's study did not also consider themselves as ethnic Norwegians because they do not have white skin, or they do not speak Norwegian at home. Some researchers such as Hubinette & Tigervall (2009) resulted from their research that whiteness is essential in order to be labelled with a Nordic identity.

It seems like individual differences are crucial in the way people react to situations. As Vedder, Horenczyk, Liebkind, and Nickmans (2006) explain children who are proud of their country of origin and background and are confident about it, usually cope much better with the challenges of immigration like discrimination. Darya has an older sister who is above 18 years old, therefore was not among the participants. However, their mother pointed to her better reaction to the new society although she was already 7 years old and did not know the language. Farzaneh said:

³ This is called assimilation strategy that is touched upon later in the same section.

Bahar is more social than Darya. It helped her a lot in finding friends and learning the language. She has always been proud of her origins and even gave presentations about Iran at school. She used to invite her friends over and asked me to cook Iranian dishes for them.

Based on the children's viewpoints of the matter, keeping the balance of the Iranian/Norwegian identity is the most insistent challenge for children who were born and raised in Norway. After all what makes children best included in the Norwegian context, as Rysst (2017) suggests is the assimilation strategies they use. It means if the children's choice of activities, ways of talking, hairstyle, etc, are the same as the Norwegian norms, the chances are higher that immigrant origin children are best included in the society (Rysst, 2015). However, Berry (2011) argues that in assimilation process, immigrants wish to belong to the majority group and somehow let their own cultural identity go which, in my idea, is not the best solution for integration. This could also demonstrate the notion of agency as a continuum that is negotiated between people and communities; meaning that children learn how to imply their agency to belong to Norwegian society.

One can conclude that even though being born in a country is important to make someone more comfortable about their position in the society, other factors may affect how they feel about themselves. Personality traits like temperaments or interests as well as other factors such as gender and age can determine children's behaviours and activities (Edwards, deGuzman, Brown, & Kumru, 2006) by acting as thickers or thinners of agency.

"Sense of belonging" to the country of origin may be a factor, as well. I did not hear the second group object to differences between Iranian and Norwegian culture as a huge challenge or hindrance. They did explain their dissatisfaction with Norwegians ignoring them because they are "different", but that is a whole distinct situation. I will discuss it more in the next section. It is also worth mentioning that although questions regarding differences of living in Iran and Norway were not quite relevant for this group of children since they never lived there, many of them have their own perspectives about Iran based on their family trips which are included throughout this chapter.

5.2 Children who Came to Norway at an Older Age

Generally, children adapt and adjust to the new country better and easier than adults (Ackers & Stalford, 2004). However, children experience challenges, as well. Learning a new language, finding friends, losing emotional support of extended family and having overwhelmed parents were the most repetitive answers from this group of children. Three of my child participants came to Norway at an older age including one boy and two girls.

Interestingly, these findings are quite the same as findings from another Iranian researcher who did her research in Trondheim in 2013. Rozita Mirsadeghi's participants

were children who came to Norway with their parents at an older age and reported somehow the same challenges.

5.2.1 Language Barriers

Corsaro and Eder (1990) explain that language plays an important role in children's cultural production. As such, "Norwegian integration and school policy highlight the importance of learning the Norwegian language from a very early age" (Rysst, 2017). She then continues to mention that when a child is among a minority group where the access to the mother tongue speakers is limited, learning the language happens easier (Ibid). Tania who came to Norway 4 years ago, said:

I didn't speak English or Norwegian by the time I came here. It was very hard because I couldn't contact anyone but some Iranian or Afghan people at school. I became depressed in the first months but my teachers and classmates at Mottakskole were very caring and kind. So, I started to get better both in the language and the emotions.

Yalda had the same experience as Tania. Sha said:

At mottaksskole, children are taught not only the language, but also the culture. But it doesn't mean that it's easy to learn them. It was definitely a big change for me and sometimes I felt the pressure to be the translator of the family because I was better in Norwegian language than everyone else in the family.

I interpreted Yalda's saying to be consistent with findings of Edwards, et al's study (2006). They reported that in immigration, families may undergo role changes. Yalda's experience of being under pressure to be a *translator* was definitely a tough position for a child to be in, but as these researchers argue it is a type of contribution from children to the family to help the parents adjust to the new country (Ibid). This could also result in children's personal growth in terms of language acquisition, etc (Weisskirch, 2010) by applying interdependent agency in order to manage the new duties.

Matin's case is different regarding that his parents decided to send him to international school from the beginning. The reason was that they initially had no plans to stay in Norway and thought that English will be more useful for their child. Matin said:

I went to international school. I learned English quite easily. I learned Norwegian, too but I did not have many Norwegian friends until I went to a Norwegian high school. The language thing was so hard to me at that point because I wasn't used to it.

In a local community like Norwegian society, it is of great importance that one speaks the language even though almost everyone speaks English on a high level. In a recently published report, researchers evaluated the inclusion programs at kindergartens and schools in different municipalities in Norway (Caspersen, Buland, Hermstad, & Røe, 2020).

They believe that integration happens differently for different groups in different levels. For children there are three levels including professional (*faglig*), social and psychological. The first level, professional integration means the extent to which children/students actively participate in a professional community. In order to do so, they need to overcome language barrier first. Therefore, one significant part of the integration programs is to provide opportunities for them to learn the language (as a thicker of agency).

5.2.2 Making Friends

On the social level of integration, the extent to which children/students are actively social, have friends and interactions with their peers indicate how well they have integrated themselves into the host society (Caspersen et al., 2020). Friendships are developmentally important for children (Buysse, Goldman, & Skinner, 2002) and provide them with a sense of belonging that may lessen their stress levels (Overton & Rausch, 2002). Migrant children lose their long-term friendships due to migration which is stressful. Thereupon, it is vital for them to make friends in the new society. However, most child participants did not have perfectly positive experiences with Norwegian local schools. On the contrary, international schools provided them with a wide range of peers from different backgrounds and cultures. Matin remembers that:

In international school, it's easy to find friends. Everyone is like the others. People accept each other and are easy-going unlike Norwegian schools. I don't know if my biggest problem was learning Norwegian or finding a Norwegian friend. They just ignore you.

It seems like being different/international which is the common point among most children at international schools, puts them at the same level. Similarity or "sameness" as Weng, Barenberg, and Anderson (2012) suggested is crucial to the construction of identity because familiarity and security come along with it. Tatum (2003) discusses that hanging out with people who are similar to you and having a sense of belonging to them, plays a significant role for young people's identity. Additionally, ignorance is actually quite common in Norwegian schools specially towards foreign children. Based on the definition from Olweus (1993, p.9) which says "a student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students", ignorance or intentional exclusion from a group could be examples of bullying. Asher (1990) called it "passive neglect" which is the second kind of the negative peer relations as well as "active rejection" (Cited in Reynolds, 2008, p.18). In this matter Yalda said:

Although I was very social, still lots of Norwegians ignored me. They listened to me but didn't answer. It was weird. I lived in Iran and Turkey for 9 years before coming here. There was never such a rare behaviour. It actually made me very sad.

I asked the children what they did to change the situation and here are their answers. Yalda said:

Being social and cool helped me a lot. I ignored their ignorance and kept getting close to them. It didn't work with everyone, but I found some friends eventually.

Even though being strong is a proper solution, it could not be the ultimate usable solution for everyone. Ignorance and feelings of rejection may have drawbacks on individual's self-esteem (Bhugra & Becker, 2005). This would be more discussed in the second section.

Tania on the other hand, joined the school's football team which was a life-changing event that acted as an agency thicker by involving her in a local situation. Since the children spend more time together as a team, she benefited from play dates. Some of her closest friends at the moments are those who were on the same team with her. She said:

Joining football team was great for me because not only I love it, it also helped me fight negative emotions, learn the language better and find friends at the same time.

5.2.3 Getting Away from Extended Family

Family is a crucial part of Iranian culture. When one talks about family, they mean both immediate and extended family members. Many children grow a strong emotional bond with their grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. Fisher, Sonn, and Bishop (2002, p.2) discuss that migration entails "the loss of social networks and familiar bonds" which are usually considered taken for granted. Hence, it is not surprising that losing all the attention, love and support influences children. As in integration levels, psychological factors are crucial in evaluating how successful individual were in integration (Caspersen et al., 2020). Tania's family lived in a different city than most their extended family. Nonetheless, she could still enjoy family connections. She said:

I waited impatiently for the holidays when either we went to our city, or they came to our house. We had so much fun together playing and talking all the time. I was pretty close to my aunt especially; even so I called her "mom" when I was younger. It was hard to imagine that I'm just going to see her via telephone.

Matin, who is the only child, was also the centre of attention in both her mother and father's families. He said:

We had and still have many family friends because my parents are social but no matter how many friends you have, nothing will replace family bond for you. I could never have the kind of relationship and closeness I have with my cousins with anyone else.

After 15 years of living abroad, his family is still closely connected to their relatives back home. They even spend summer vacation in Iran almost every year.

When I discussed family connections with all participants in focus group discussions, parents who have two children (one leaving Iran at an older age and one being born or completely raised in Norway), pointed to the differences they saw in their two children's reactions to family bonds. For instance, Lida and her husband, Peyman witnessed that their older daughter was sad the first months after migration because she lost her grandparents' attention while the second daughter does not feel the need for attention from grandparents much since she never experienced it.

5.2.4 Overwhelmed Parents

Migration is not easy specifically if one has children. Not only one must figure out how to live in a new country with different language and culture, but they also have the responsibility to take care of their children. When parents are not settled down, it might get more difficult to pay enough attention to their children. In this matter Yalda said:

My parents had to leave a good life and successful career in Iran. Besides, they were not that young. It was very hard for them to adjust to Turkey and then Norway. Especially Norway was much harder because Turkish people were warmer. They are closer to us in many ways but Norwegians not really. So, they struggled with their own problems and didn't have enough time to spend with me and my brothers.

In focus group discussions, parents agreed that the quality time they had with their younger children was more fruitful rather than what they had with the older ones. The reason is simple: parents must spend a good deal of time on their own studies, work, etc. Consequently, they would not have effective parent-child relationship due to the exhaustion and fatigue. This is an inside-the-family crisis which could lead to tensions at home between children and parents or parents themselves. Matin remembers:

My father was not at home very often because of work. My mom was home, but she was busy with the language classes and other things. They did not spend as much time together and with me as they used to. I remember they argued a lot and mostly about me. Whether I had to go to international or Norwegian school, what time I should be home, etc.

His mother confirmed what he said and added:

It was because we were so tired of everything. There was no power left to think well. We lost our patience and argued in front of him.

Moreover, parents' roles are crucial for children's peer relationships. Yu et al. (2011, p.2) suggest three ways in which parents can support their children's peer relationships including "(1) positive parent-child interactions; (2) parents' roles as supervisors and advisers during children's play; and (3) parents' roles as providers of social opportunities such as potlucks or family events". This also is in line with interdependent notion of agency

which suggests intergenerational relationships affect how a child contributes to different activities (Abebe, 2019). As busy parents in my research tended to have less free time to dedicate to such activities, their children were deprived from direct or indirect effects of such networks (Richardson & Schwartz, 1998).

5.3 Effects of Challenges on Children

Edwards, et al (2006) categorize immigration as a social transformation that has remarkable effects on families especially children. They believe that children's own personal and developmental agendas in addition to meanings they attribute to events, should be considered relevant when one is analysing how transformations affect children. No matter the family status or the children's ages, all my child participants have undergone some sort of issues caused by the challenges that living in a foreign country forces upon people. They claimed they suffered from at least one of the migration's side effects. The most repeated problem was stress and sadness which many of them endured to some extent.

5.3.1 Mental Health Hazards

Migration is a stressful life event that might cause common mental disorders or difficulties in migrants (Gillam, Jarman, white, et al, 1989, cited in Bhugra, 2004, p.251). Both children and parents had stress or/and sadness after coming to Norway, but I received the answer "stress/depression" over and over when interviewing children.⁴

Earlier in this chapter, I discussed the children's experiences with ignorance and bullying at Norwegian schools. Researches depict that bullying can affect children's mental and physical health such as depression, anxiety, poor self-esteem, social isolation, etc (e.g.Espelage & Swearer, 2004; Olweus, 1993). In addition, the psychological level of integration introduced by Caspersen et al. (2020) suggests that the expressions of experiences that children/students have in various school arenas such as bullying or abuse, describe their psychological integration into the host society. Shirin, born in Norway wrote in her essay:

When I was younger, I wanted everyone at school to like me. I thought if everyone likes me, then it's not important that I'm a foreigner. It was stressful because it's not possible. I tried to please them, help them, etc but they didn't care. None of the things I did was a reason for them to like me. Only a few people became my friends.

I later asked Shirin if she changed her attitude and she said:

⁴ It is necessary to indicate that the words "stress" and "depression" in this part, are the participant's words to describe their mental situation. None of them actually cited a diagnosis from a psychologist or psychiatrist.

Yes, I realized that I can't please everyone. A friendship means that you and your friend(s) care about each other the same.

Tania also wrote in her essay:

I was stressed and depressed. I didn't like to go to school and couldn't eat or sleep well, either. I texted my friends in Iran all the time and asked them how everything is. The only thing that could make me happy was talking to my friends and my aunt back in Iran.

This quote confirms the significance of social support in an immigrant child's life that was discussed as a main challenge earlier in the chapter.

5.3.2 Academic Performance

Not all but some of the participants (from older children) showed a drop in academic performance due to the pressures of migration. On the other hand, academic performance and stress level are significantly related to each other (Still, 1998, cited in Bhugra, 2004, p.251). Accordingly, children with high stress levels, experienced problems with academic results. This could have another reason, as well. These children were not familiar with the educational system in Norway. Matin said:

Educational system in these two countries are nothing like each other. The way of teaching, the exams, the evaluation system and everything else is so different. I wasn't used to it. I couldn't believe that you're not supposed to write home assignments all the time.

Tania and Yalda were likewise surprised by the immense differences. Unfamiliarity and stress as contextual factors were thinners of agency for these children and made them grow some academic failures. Tania said:

The (educational) system in Norway is better than Iran. However, I was more stressed than impressed by it. I had to take my time to start getting back to where I was academically in Iran and Turkey.

I argued about the importance of ethnic identity beforehand. Tatum (2003) discusses in her book that if a child is successful in having an ethnic identity, their well-being boosts; which leads to the enhancement of positive educational experiences (Jávo, 2010). Therefore, a solution to help immigrant children with their academic performances, could be to help them with the ethnic identity construction as well as their integration to the society.

5.3.3 Family/sibling Issues

In the previous sections, I marked some tensions families had due to the challenges of living in Norway. Here, I would more specifically consider the children's experiences with family/sibling issues.

Afsoon, who left Iran as a two-year-old girl with her mother and her brother, lived in Greece before coming to Norway. By that time, she was a teenager and difficulties of moving from one place to another made her furious. She said:

I was angry at my mom back then. We had a good life in Greece. I had many friends. I kept telling her that I don't want to come but she didn't listen. So, I started to act out, I shouted at her and my older brother. I didn't study language lessons. I stayed out late. We had many problems.

I brought up the issue in focus group discussions and asked them what happened to the family and how they managed the situation. Afsson's mother (Hasti) said:

She called child protection services once and told them that we bit her. They took her away and sent her to a foster home for two months. She wasn't happy there and kept calling them. She confessed that she lied because she was mad at us and came back home. After that, my son and I talked to her and asked her to start therapy. She did and we worked it out with professional help.

Afsson said:

I guess I was angry because of our whole family situation. I never really had a good relationship with my dad. I liked living in Greece and moving from there was a big shock to me. Norway was not the way I expected it. People didn't care, they were cold. I thought my life was a mess and I did all that bad things, but therapy helped me a lot. We don't have many problems now.

Hasti's family situation is different from the rest of the research participants since they left Iran as asylum seekers. Their residence in Norway was also a case of asylum. Therefore, based on their own narratives, I interpreted their journey from Iran to Greece and finally Norway to be a long tense experience. Not having the father around was another push factor that aggravated the tensions as Afsson and her brother were sensitive teenagers back then. All these factors combined together made this family vulnerable and their relationships disruptive. However, they were able to solve issues with the punctual and appropriate intervention of Norwegian child-care organization (Barnevern).

Nonetheless the relationship difficulties for Hasti's family, they learned to trust one another and grew a better connection afterwards. As Paulsen and Berg (2016) mention, a child who encountered child welfare services, needs to receive practical and emotional support and guidance from either adults/parents or child services to have a healthy transition to adulthood. In recent case, the support was from both Afsoon's family members and child services. One should also distinguish "harmful" events and challenges from "growth enhancement" ones which be thinners and thickers of agency, too. If children can develop

the type of learnings and perspectives which are beneficial to them socially and emotionally, then their environment is growth enhancement (Edwards, et al, 2006). The type of issues my participants spoke about were quite diverse. They vary from severe issues with law and professional services, to mother-daughter arguments. For instance, Shirin said:

My mother was very religious many years ago. She wanted me to wear long sleeve and covered clothes. My brother had no problem wearing whatever he wanted or staying out late, but she restricted me. My father argued with her and I remember him saying this is what parents do in Iran. Leave her alone. But she continued to be like that until she slowly changed. Now she's fine.

This is an example of an individual's opinion (Shirin's mother, Minoo) that clashes with another person's desires as well as the continuum and interdependent notions of agency that move back and forth depending on different situations and interactions. Minoo in this case, had old traditional/religious values that might be relevant to Iranian society inside Iran. She said that in early years of migration, she was only trying to protect her children and was not aware of the impacts sticking to old values in a new setting had on them. Many of the parents confessed that setting rules for their children especially when they reach teenage years, has been the most difficult decision because as Iranian parents, they had a different mentality about raising a child, whereas children aspired to have the same rights and freedom as their Norwegian or international friends. Therefore, the type of arguments like the example above was common when I asked the question: how did these challenges affect your relationships?

5.4 Children's Perceptions of Advantages of Living in Norway

Comparing life in different places could be interesting, specifically if those countries are different in terms of fundamental backgrounds such as religion, culture, language, etc. However, it is not as easy as it might seem. People who are chosen to provide us with the information are required to have sufficient experiences of living in the countries and develop a comprehensive understanding of them.

In the case of the children in my research, three of them have lived in Iran for some years before migration and only one of them has a clear image of living there since the other two moved out of the country many years ago. The other seven child participants of my research have never been in Iran for more than the short period of holidays. Despite this limitation, I found it interesting to discuss their ideas about life in Norway and Iran. Moreover, I believe that most their comments about Iran (especially among those who were born and raised here), which will be discussed in the following parts, refer to their parents' conversations at home.

5.4.1 Freedom of Choice

Elnaz and Golnaz, are daughters of Amir and Farimah who were born in Norway. In the individual interviews, they revealed they have only seen Iran three times and do not have many comments about it. Then in the focus group discussions with parents speaking about religious issues, they were reminded of a situation where Golnaz was afraid because someone told her to keep her hijab. She became emotional and told me:

I was on the street with my cousin and this lady said you're a big girl, you should wear a scarf. I didn't know what to do, and my Persian was not good enough to even answer her. It was terrifying.

I asked Golnaz how she feels about wearing a scarf when she travels to Iran and she said:

It's not comfortable really. I'm not used to it. I'm very happy that we're living somewhere where I don't have to wear a scarf. It's especially awful in the hot summer days.

This child's quote refers to the fact that in Iran having a hijab is compulsory for girls above the age of 9 years old. Not following this rule might result in someone ending up in the police station or court at worst. As Ziba (Yalda's mother) said:

Compulsory hijab rule violates individual right of people to decide for their own appearance. This was one of the problems we had. I remember every time we travelled aboard, on the way from the airport Yalda asked me why I have scarf here and not there? How was I supposed to explain it to a little girl?

Yalda herself wrote in her essay that although she is not living in Iran anymore, she always kept contact with her cousins and does not like the way they have to cover themselves all the time. She wrote:

One thing I do enjoy about living in Norway is that there is absolutely no pressure on you. You can decide how you like to live your life. You choose it yourself. It's awesome.

5.4.2 Secured Future

A national survey on the quality of life by Statistics Norway (SSB, 2020) showed that most Norwegians are highly satisfied with their lives (26 % of the population as in March 2020). This is one example which in my opinion has transformed Norway into a popular migration destination. Living in a tranquil land is such a blessing particularly for people who have experienced the opposite situation like many participants of this study. Tania said:

I love my country and its culture but now that I have lived in Norway for almost 4 years, I understand what a good life really means. I like it that people are relaxed and calm. People in Iran are not as relaxed as here. I know that people in Iran have a lot of stress because of financial problems and unstable jobs. Here everyone knows their future is going

to be fine. They don't need to necessarily study to find a good job. They can do whatever they enjoy for living and payments are high unlike in Iran.

Matin, who has lived in USA as well, told me that he prefers living in Norway because people are calm and relaxed. He said:

I became relaxed, too. I don't concern myself that much about the future because I know I can work it out and there is not stress whatsoever. I think my parents are also more relaxed than when we were in Iran or USA.

Given participants' perspectives, Norway presents a well-quality and somehow guaranteed future to the residents as a result of its stability and highly profiled status. Researchers have investigated the relationship between future and present stressing that imagining a favoured future, both guides and motivates individuals' thought and action in the present time (Sools, 2020). Hence, as Murray and Sools (2014, cited in Sools, 2020, p.461) suggest, future, present and past narratives are interconnected and culturally, socially, and historically shaped.

5.4.3 Educational System

"A child's experience of migration is largely shaped by their experience of the education system" (Gillborn,1995 cited in Reynolds, 2008, p.2). To this matter, both children who were born and raised in Norway and those who moved here at an older age have shaped their experiences based on the educational system. In this part I will take a glance at the children's perspectives about it. Sima said:

I sometimes talk to my older sister about when she was a student in Iran. She doesn't remember clearly but it sounds difficult and very different. My mom also confirmed it. I think based on what I heard what we have here is better.

The differences she mentioned refer to the evaluation and grading system. According to Yalda, who was a student in Turkey and now in Norway:

The system in Turkey was somehow like Iran. In Norway you get a score from 1 (lowest) to 6 (highest). These numbers are descriptive; it means that they describe your level of knowledge and understanding about the course, they don't represent you unlike Iran and Turkey which is really stressful.

5.5 Children's Perceptions of Disadvantages of Living in Norway

Although most my child participants liked living in Norway, they were not completely satisfied with it. No matter if they moved here at an older age or were born here, they had some negative points to mention about living in Norway which would be argued in the following parts.

5.5.1 Food Culture

I love Iranian food. When I go to Iran, I ask everyone to just cook Iranian food for me.

This was Sanaz's first answer when I asked what things about Norway she does not really like. She told me:

I like that you have many choices in cooking. I think Norwegian food is boring unlike Iranian food which is full of taste and colour. I also ask my mom to cook Iranian food when I invite my friends over to show them how wonderful they are.

Shirin also told me:

I'm a big fan of Iranian dishes but I eat the normal Norwegian food most of the time because they're fast unlike Iranian food that take hours to be prepared. However, I can't wait for weekends when my mom has enough time to make my favourite dishes.

Food has an essential role in social life among Iranians. As it will be discussed in next chapter, people talk to each other about food all the time. Accordingly, children are interested in this topic by indicating their tendency for tasting or cooking Iranian food themselves.

5.5.2 Facing Judgments as a Foreigner

Studies suggest that migrant children face plenty of difficulties such as racism or anti-immigration sentiments at the worst cases (Ackers and Stalford, 2004). This might not be the experience of all the children, however, ethnic Norwegians' judgmental perspectives, was a common complain as the following conversation demonstrates:

Norwegians seem nice. They smile at you but behind this smile, they are always judging you. The only reason they don't tell their opinions in your face like Americans do is that they were thought to keep their ideas for themselves.

said Matin. I asked him which one he prefers; keeping quite or voicing one's opinion and here is what he said:

If judgments are only at your head, it's ok. They become a problem when you don't like someone because of the judgements you have. I feel like Norwegians judge you based on your nationality and appearance and don't even try to know you after that. I prefer to talk to people and solve any misunderstandings.

Shirin also told me:

It is true that Norwegians keep a distance with foreigners. I know it because I hear them when they talk about someone who is new. Sometimes I think to myself maybe they talk

about me when I'm not there, too. Maybe they don't, I don't know. What I know for sure is that they judge a lot but it's not fair to do such a thing to anyone.

Brit Berg suggests in her booklet (2018) that "doing something together" as in a "buddy project" might help people develop a better understanding of other's backgrounds, lifestyles and experiences. She argues that by doing so, prejudice and discrimination may reduce among Norwegians and immigrants.

5.5.3 Not Caring Enough about Other Children

This came as a surprise to me that both parents and children complained about this problem. When we discussed things, they do not like about Norway or would like to change, almost all of them pointed to this as a major shock. For instance, Golnaz told me:

There were times when I went to my friend's house, it was time to eat lunch or dinner and their parents called her to eat. She left me alone at her room and did not even apologize. When she came here, my mom cooked delicious food or prepared snacks, she knew how we treat our guests and did not even think she could ask their parents to invite me, too. I stopped going to her house.

Golnaz was not the only child to claim she had an unpleasant experience. Sanaz, Yalda, Tania and Afsoon also called it "a very disrespectful behaviour".

There is a proverb in Persian language which says "Mehman habibe khodast" which means guest is sent from the God. So, people do their best to make sure their guest(s) are enjoying their time. Therefore, it is a huge shock to see how easy others take the situation. Farzaneh whose both daughters experienced this situation said:

Although I think when a child is at your home, it is more than normal to invite them to eat with you, I insist that this is not just about food. There were times when a friend of my daughter came to our house. When she wanted to go back, it was late or too cold; I always gave her a ride because I was worried something might happen or I would text her parents and asked if they want to me send her by taxi. But they just never cared enough to even text to tell me my daughter has left their house. This is not being cool or relaxed, this is irresponsibility.

Caring about others is a distinct characteristic among Iranians as Iran has a collective feminine community. Maybe, some of the experiences they had risen from the fact that they "expected" Norwegians to act as them. Consequently, when it did not happen, they became frustrated. I believe that expectations -rising from ta'arof culture- should be customized to the society we live in. Otherwise, we would face culture shock as my participants did.

5.5.4 Closeness

I argued the importance of openness of the destination society in order for the newcomers to integrate better in the last chapter. "Closeness" of the people in the new society might be an obstacle towards integration. This is a term Matin utilized in the individual interview. He said:

In comparison to Americans, Norwegians are very closed-minded. I mean they have a hard time accepting new people. In USA, you start a friendship easily by just texting back and forth and spending some time, but here, you are not easily accepted into their circles. If you don't get inside a circle, you will be alone.

Shirin, as someone who was born in Norway said:

My different eastern look was not popular when I was younger. It was like people are categorized into blond and not blond. Everyone who is not blond, is a stranger and strangers are not welcomed. It got better by the time and I have less problem now, but I would always remember it. It is the 21st century; people should really get over this type of stuff and respect each other. I mean is that really hard?

The reason for this "closeness" might refer to the fact that Norway unlike some other European countries such as UK, has not reached "super-diversity" yet. In countries like UK, immigrants are distinguished by a combination of their ethnic background and immigration status which at the end benefits them by soothing their integration and inclusion (Reynolds, 2008). As a result, they may feel that native people of the host country are more open and friendly since identity boundaries and differences become wiped out in multi-ethnic environments (Ibid). This might happen to Norway in the future, hope many research participants.

5.6 summary

In this analysis chapter, I have demonstrated the experiences of migrant children in terms of daily challenges. I allocated two separate categories for children's challenges based on their different experiences. Learning the language, making friends and figuring out one's identity are examples of the main challenges for the children in these groups. The second section of the chapter presents the diverse effects of challenges on children from mental and physical health to family tensions. In the last two sections of the chapter, I have discussed children's perceptions of positive (secured future) and negative (facing judgments) points of living in Norway.

Chapter Six: Analysis of Data Regarding Parents' Perspectives about Family Life and Social Integration

In this chapter, I will go through the data gathered from interviews with parents. I draw the attention to the importance of including parents in childhood studies research before and that is why I think it is essential to dedicate a separate analysis chapter to the gathered data from parents.

I divided this chapter into five different sections. First, I would describe daily challenges of living and raising children in Norway as presented by parents. While some of them were repeated by most of participants, there are challenges that only a few people pointed to. The second section belongs to the effects of challenges on people individually and as a family. I categorized these effects into three phases which by some means, could be relevant for all adult participants. The third section summarizes the ways in which participants tried to integrate themselves into the new community, followed by examples of levels of integration among them. The fourth and fifth sections, are dedicated to the positive and negative points of social life in Norway, respectively. Differences of living in Iran and Norway, and various perspectives of integration are also discussed throughout this chapter.

6.1. Challenges of Living in Norway

6.1.1 Language Barriers

One of the main challenges of living in a country different from one's own is the question of language that may limit a person's agency in several areas, as well. This is because learning a new language is directly connected to the settlement and integration in the host society. It affects almost all of a person's life such as labour market, understanding regulations, gaining access to services, etc. (Hamberger, 2009 cited in Ferguson, 2011, p.24). Language is also paramount for individuals since it incorporates identities, social organization and integration (Kyratzis, 2004). The fact of how learning language is equally important and challenging is reflected in an excerpt from Sara, a 47-year-old woman who has been living in Trondheim for 17 years who said learning a new language was the hardest task for her as a new comer in Norwegian society. It was not a surprise to me to realize that all my participants struggled with the language at some point. Many of them identified it as the first challenge they came across especially women who came to Norway alongside their husbands.

I was never good at languages. I did not speak English very well when I first came here. So, it was much harder for me to communicate with others because I had absolutely no way to talk to anyone except for my Iranian friends, said Sara.

Under such circumstances, having access to limited fields and confined social network, I think it is only normal that not only integration into the host society, but also mingling with other international families becomes a tough task. Furthermore, years ago, it was not as easy as it is nowadays to learn a new language. There was no fast and easy access to online translation websites. In addition, people had to register for Norwegian classes at schools where it took a long time to get in. Farimah, for instance, waited 4 years before she could enter a language class.

I learned some things by living here for 4 years but I needed to have academic learning and also a diploma if I wished to study or work here.

Even though most participants could speak English upon arrival, Farimah's quote demonstrates how important it is to learn the language of the country one lives in. Some of the participants, mostly men and fewer women who came here as PhD or master's degree students had easier access to language classes since they could use NTNU's classes. However, there was not such an opportunity for their families to use their affiliation to sign up for classes like today. However, even if learning language is key, it is not the only mechanism through which integration is facilitated in Norway, as Hamed said:

Language is necessary but definitely not enough to integrate into Norwegian society. He added: when you learn Norwegian, they become more comfortable talking to you which is obviously because everyone prefers to speak in their mother tongue, but it doesn't mean that they have accepted you. Acceptance is another thing that is hard to get in this society.

I agree with the latter sentence and believe that there are plenty of reasons for why acceptance in a society does not fully rely on knowing the language. One reason is that one should know social codes as well as the language in order to be able to understand what other people mean, because social codes or cultures are constructed by "the actions of individuals and groups and their interactions with the larger society" (Nagel, 1994 cited in Fisher et al., 2002, p. 162). Lida used a metaphor about this process which describes the role of language in a new country.

A new country is like a new house with a closed door. When you don't know the language, you don't have the key to open the door. You are so excited and desperate to find the key. So, you learn the language but when you open the door, it just hits you. Now you're in the house but you have no clue what is happening there.

I interpreted the metaphor as in learning the language (opening the door) is crucial, then one should utilize this tool to learn about social and cultural norms in the new country. It looks like learning process is a continuous task for immigrants that changes from one form

(e.g. language) to another (e.g. social codes) and never goes away completely. The importance of cultural learning is discussed in next section.

Most women I interviewed speak Norwegian to some extent, but men had a more difficult time learning the language although they had a better opportunity to access NTNU classes. This interesting gender difference could lie in the fact that women have “small talk” with others no matter how well they speak the language. Men tended to be more careful about their grammatical or pronunciation mistakes. As a result, they felt less confident in speaking Norwegian rather than English. Besides, almost all the men, started working in international companies or academic environment where English is the official spoken language and they never really felt the pressure to speak Norwegian. Women on the other hand, started working in kindergartens or schools where they were encouraged to speak Norwegian. Some of them even worked in volunteer jobs with the purpose to reinforce their language skills and find friends.

6.1.2 Cultural Challenges

Culture is embedded inside people’s everyday lives, routines and interactions. Thus, cultural influences on socialization should not be considered separated from social class, ethnicity, or religion (Edwards et al., 2006, p.26). “Culture must be identified inside developmental contexts, for example, inside peer relationship” (Ibid). Culture shock is a known phenomenon among many people around the world. Cultural differences can be huge or slight. In the case of comparing Iran and Norway, there is certainly a huge cultural difference because of the different backgrounds of the two countries. That is probably why all the participants mentioned it as a main challenge they came across when they first came to Norway. Lida, a 45-year-old woman told me that connecting with Norwegians is hard for her because “we” do not have common topics of conversation with “them”. Farzaneh later said:

They can talk about cabin trips, going skiing and drinking for hours. But we never enjoy a conversation like that. Iranians like to talk about food, gatherings and relationships. I think that is why we hardly could have a long conversation with a Norwegian because our social codes were and still are totally different.

I asked Farzaneh if the many years of living in Norway have changed her attitude about social codes and she said:

Yes, throughout years, I learned that I must change myself in order to survive in my new home. I had to do it, otherwise I would have just become depressed.

She also mentioned that studying social behaviour of the Norwegian society and learning interpersonal skills could have helped her with better acceptance of the change process.

These are thickers of agency as mentioned in previous chapter and would be discussed in a separate section of this chapter.

Changes are inevitable in migration. One way in which change is reflected in migration is through acculturation. Berry (2011) uses the concept "acculturation" to describe the changes that a minority group should undergo when moving to a new country. He defines acculturation as "the process of cultural and psychological change that follows intercultural contact" (Berry, 2003 cited in Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006, p.305). Examples of cultural and psychological changes are alterations in people's economic and political lives, and their attitudes and identities, respectively (Ibid). I think these types of changes, especially psychological changes, are greatly influenced by personal traits and skills. In that matter I would have to agree with Farzaneh's opinion that interpersonal skills are helpful in coping with the changes. However, this is not as easy as it seems to learn about whole other cultural norms. It depends on how a person handles the change process, as well. I will describe this in another section of the present chapter.

6.1.3 Limited Knowledge and Awareness about the Country of Residence

Lack of proper awareness of Norwegian rules and norms was one of the factors that participants affirmed. For example, Behrooz, a 43-year-old man who came to Norway 4 years ago said:

we had no idea about anything like the tax system, how to buy a house, etc. This is because the system is so different. Not only we come from a different country, but we're from another continent. Everything is very normal for Norwegians that they do not explain or maybe they think we should look the information up online, but the truth is that even though we do that, there are still lots of things we are not aware of. We need to find the right information if we want to survive.

While men focused more on the more general application of the rules for the family, women cared more about the type of information required to gain as a mother to take care of their children. A research with immigrant women reported that difficulties women face with the immigration usually are about finding appropriate childcare for their kids and a lack of transport (Ferguson, 2011). In this matter Farzaneh said:

Learning the language and getting used to the new place took up so much time for me, leaving me with little time to learn about how to manage my daughter in this situation. I didn't know what the best way was to raise her. I didn't consider myself a good reference for her because I was so unaware back then. But when my second child was born, I had more confidence and information about the situation. I had my past experiences that I could use in raising my little daughter.

Lack of awareness might also come from not spreading/negotiating the information inside Iranian society, as Behrooz suggested that I think might narrow one's agency down (as in agency as a continuum). This is a serious issue since sharing information, as well as a sense of community with people from the same background, provides "a protective function for members and also facilitates the adaptation process" (Ferguson, 2011, p. 3). Accordingly, engagement with the ethnic group comes with enhancement of social and psychological wellbeing probably by negotiating challenges of the new country (Fisher et al., 2002).

6.1.4 Personal Adaptation

Migration process is indeed stressful and can affect individuals and their families (Bhugra and Becker, 2005), but how a person adjusts to the demands of living in a new society, depends on plenty of factors including personal traits such as how easy-going and eager they are to learn, as well as the experiences they had in the past. If someone has not ever experienced a similar situation, it would be much harder for them to cope with the new cultural environment and all the learning they should go through. Sociability, being open to changes, suffering from any kinds of mental or physical disorders and previous learning processes were among the factors (agency thickers or thinners) that participants pointed to. As Behrooz said:

The way people experience life and its challenges is not only a matter of how they cope inside the destination society; so is the matter of their own interpretations, problems and experiences that might arise from their own personality traits. For example, a person who is social and starts mingling with others after migration would possibly face fewer harsh experiences than someone who is introverted.

Interestingly, I witnessed men facing more difficulties in the overall socialization and integration process than women. Most of them confirmed that if it was not for their families, especially their children, they would have come back to Iran after the end of the study/work period. Lida said:

It was easier for me to cope with Norway and norms for living here than my husband. I think it's because I was ready to learn what this society has to offer but my husband was more dependent on his roots and his family. So, he couldn't change his mindset for a long time.

Both physical and mental health are very important for active engagement within the society and using the opportunities provided for integration (Ager & Strang, 2008). Simin who suffers from some physical disorders explained how well-being is linked to the experiences of migration:

Challenges of migration are pretty much the same for everyone, I think. Now imagine suffering from a serious physical condition which makes you more vulnerable. One of my main problems for a long time was to accept the fact that there is no family here to help me when I'm in need. Even the thought of that, made me feel miserable. I started panicking and feeling depressed which made me function less as a mother, wife and a member of the new society.

Emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills are good sources for people that act as shields against demanding situations like above-mentioned ones. According to Farzaneh they could reinforce people's emotional capacity which makes them stronger when they must deal with the hardships they come across as foreigners by helping them accept the alteration that migration brings upon their lives.

6.1.5 Emotional Adversities

Social support is a key factor in people's lives. In the case of immigrants, it becomes even more essential. It is ideal if immigrants benefit from the support of people from their own ethnicity because it provides them with their familiar cultural practices, patterns and relationships. Accordingly, this support makes it easier for immigrants to settle down (Ager and Strang, 2008). The loss of such familiar and supportive structure may cause a grief reaction which Eisenbruch (1991) has called "cultural bereavement". Relationships in Iran are based on closeness, and people get to spend much time together. Therefore, leaving the country means that you are leaving a big household behind which can have dramatic emotional consequences on people. Most of my participants remember suffering from the distance, lack of family and close friends here at first. Simin who moved to Trondheim four years ago said:

I had a close connection with my own family and my husband's family, as well. We talked to each other almost every day on the phone. We saw each other often even though we lived in two different cities. Losing this connection affected us especially our daughter who used to be in the middle of attentions and suddenly lost it all.

Living far away from loved ones is indeed a hard experience. However, many participants stated that this used to be more difficult in the beginning of 2000 decade when lots of families I interviewed, came to Norway. Lida remembers:

Getting away from my family and friends was the hardest thing I had to do in that time. We did not intend to stay here but it didn't make it any easier. Besides, calling them was not as easy as today. You are just a click away from seeing your mother on your phone today, but we didn't have this opportunity back then.

Most adult participants agreed that finding an emotional support circle in Norway was a difficult task. I kept hearing that Norwegians do not let other people into their community easily, one should be very patient and wait a long time before finding friends among locals. Thus, the emotional vacuum worsens every day. For Iranian people who come from a different culture where befriending other people is simple and straightforward, this might be a huge difference leading feeling of loneliness in the new society. Sara, who has lived in USA for some years, compares Norway to United States:

In USA, people don't care where you come from. You can easily find friends among Americans or other nationalities soon after you arrived. This makes you feel better about yourself. Such thing never happens in Norway. Probably because it hasn't been a long time since Norway started to host people from other countries, I think Norway still has a long way to go with learning how to treat foreigners and helping them integrate.

For Iranian immigrants, a strong social network is part of a cultural identity. I believe social networks and the sense of acceptance by the host society may assist immigrants feel more included and integrated into Norwegian society. Albeit the fact that Norwegian laws take immigrants' rights into serious consideration, there still exists the problem of translating policy into reality. As Heaven Crawley (2009) suggests, "Leadership in confronting these issues at the local and national levels is a political imperative".

6.1.6 Religious Differences

Religious differences play a key role in the way people conceptualize each other. Religion, and special dressing code that comes with it also have an impact on how individuals "see and are seen in specific spaces at specific times" (Lewis, 2010 cited in Phillips, 2009, p.69). Majority of the population in Iran are Muslims, Shiite and all participants in this research are among them. However, only two women consider themselves religious. One of them is Minoos who came to Trondheim 20 years ago and wore a hijab at the beginning. She said:

I come from a religious family. Hijab has always been important in my family. So, I wore a scarf and long-sleeve clothes at the beginning. After some time, I realized that people misunderstood me and thought that I am not an open person. It was hard to find a job or friends. So, I decided to let it go. I felt bad at the beginning but then I got used to it and soon, I realized that being spiritual is what matters not having a specific kind of cover on your head.

In a chapter of the book *Muslim Spaces of Hope: Geographies of Possibility in Britain and the West*, edited by Phillips (2010), Reina Lewis explains that there is a 'moral panic' about Islam in the western world. She believes that hijab or Islamic dressing code is antagonistic to "the positive qualities associated with hip cosmopolitanism" (p. 69).

It seemed like although Iranian society has a religious background, participants of this study are not particularly religious. Some of them clarified that their families were never strict about hijab or religion. Therefore, they never felt the pressure to show a religious version of themselves while some like Minoo and Simin, struggled (or are still struggling) with their lifetime Islamic trainings.

While speaking about the first years of migration, Amir said:

The city that you come from and your family background, are very important in the way you adjust yourself with the new place. Most people who were from religious cities and had strong connections with their identity and family could not stay here. They liked living here because of the peace and job opportunities but could not stand the fact that you should change yourself including your religious beliefs to be able to live here.

What Amir pointed to is supported by Bhugra and Becker (2005, p.22) who claimed "it is important to consider the nature of the society an individual has migrated from and to, and the social characteristics of the individual who has migrated, in determining how well a person will adjust during the migration process". I, on the other hand, have seen religious people who look for religious events in town or have complete hijab in Trondheim. Consequently, I believe religion is not an easy area to discuss since it is interrelated with people's beliefs, family backgrounds, etc. It is therefore especially individual and very sensitive to talk about among Iranian society because it is rooted with our identities.

6.2 Effects of Challenges on Participants

Researchers suggest that in societies which undergo extensive changes like immigration, life gets unpredictable for practices of children and families. (e.g., Weisner, Bradley, & Kilbride, 1997 cited in Edwards, et al., 2006, p.38). The way people get along with these massive transformations depends on age, individual and social resources (Ibid).

Analysing data gathered from fieldwork; I watched a pattern in the participants' answers repeated by almost all of them. I am going to describe this pattern in three phases to present a holistic image of the experiences of the participants. Though it is vital to mention that these stages are back and forth experiences that families negotiate and navigate through time and situations. Stages are as followed:

6.2.1 Phase One; Moving Away from Family members, Tensions Rise

In this phase, people start to feel the pressure of migration individually and as a family unit because of isolation from ethnic culture and ostracism by the majority group (Bhugra and Becker, 2005). People would react differently; some might feel anxious, overwhelmed or sad while others would show more physical signs like migraines, etc.

Men usually had the pressure of studies or working in a brand-new environment, coping with all the differences between what they were used to and what they faced in Norway as well as the pressure to provide for the family. Women, on the other hand, felt the pressure in a different way. They lost their support system which was family and close friends in Iran and had the responsibility to raise the children with their very little knowledge of the new society. Some of them, started to study as master students at the same time as their husbands. Thus, they had more problems regarding home management and keeping the balance of the time spent on studies, as well as family and home. Behrooz remembers that:

When we came here first, everything was new. I did not know what to do, how to study, etc. I left a job in Iran to study here. I was under financial pressure, as well. I knew I have to find a job alongside my studies, or we had to go back to Iran after one year. So, I got very nervous, my wife and I argued at home. It looked like we were unable to solve our problems. The first months of migration were among the worst days of my life.

Mansoor, Farzaneh's husband mentioned that:

I came here only to do a PhD. We had no long-term goals to stay here. Plus, I knew that when I go back to Iran with a higher certificate, I'm going to get a promotion. But my wife and daughter loved living here. It caused arguments between us which lasted for a few years. But finally, realizing that my family doesn't want to go back, I had to start looking for a job.

As we can see in the excerpts above, craving different things in a family setting causes tensions and conflicts. Conflicts result in a mental distance between couples which cannot have good outcomes for the family, either. However, despite the conflicts, a combination of various factors such as better employment, children's needs and educational progress shape the decision to migrate for good (Ackers and Stalford, 2004). This fact is exemplified by the example of Farzaneh who said:

The reason I insisted to stay here was that I saw the difference of educational system. Sure, he [her husband] would get a better position at work [back in Iran], but the quality of life we have here, could not be replaced with anything.

Farzaneh's sentence showed the point I discussed earlier; that women felt more responsible for children and based their decisions on their children while men thought about the bigger picture for the family rather than focusing merely on a member. A couple with different ideas develops interpersonal problems that not only affects them, but could damage children in one way or another, too. Lida had the same idea to Farzaneh and said:

I think it's normal to have problems. You find yourself in a position that you weren't ready for. All people I know had the same problems but if man and woman in a family have the same growth pace, it would be possible to control the situation. When I asked her to explain what she means by the same growth pace, she said:

Most of us followed our husbands here. We left our jobs in Iran but here there was nothing else to do rather than household and family responsibilities. In the meanwhile, our husbands were developing in their studies or jobs which made us feel bad about ourselves. This was another reason for our arguments. So, I think it's important that everyone develops their own position in the society.

6.2.2 Phase Two; Getting Close to Each Other, Fighting Against the Challenges and Hardships

Edwards, et al. (2006) argued the significance of interdependence among family members in social transformations like immigration. They continued to say that family members learn to rely on each other to be able to leave behind the pressures and difficulties of immigration. Phase one might last a few months depending on how well people control stresses of migration. There is a psychological model called Yerkes-Dodson Law (1908) which is an empirical relationship between pressure and performance. It says the highest performance is achieved when people experience a moderate amount of pressure (Yerkes & Dodson, 1908). Most of my participants who were under moderate pressure finally put themselves together and decided to leave behind all the stressors. Couples became closer to each other and tried to find solutions for the conflicts they faced for some time. Simin said:

Behrooz played an important role in finding stability at home. As soon as he found a job, he became more relaxed. As a result, I felt calmer and more supported by him. Our home felt like home then because we realized that only we can help our family to heal from everything and we did it.

Farimah who gave birth to both her children in Norway said that she and her husband knew they only had each other since there was no family around. So, they stuck together. Sticking together and supporting one another sounds good, however, it is not easy to achieve. In fact, it took families a long time and so much effort to come up with ideas on how to do that. Sara said:

The only way was to speak to each other a lot which lots of times turned into arguments. Especially when it came to decisions about our son, my husband and I had totally different ideas. We both wanted the best for him but in our very own ways. But throughout the time, we learned to manage these arguments.

Neither Sara nor her husband, Reza explained the details of how they managed the difference in their perspectives. I should mention that not all participants had the same experience regarding phases. For example, Parvin came here in 2002 after getting married to an Iranian/Norwegian man. Her experience of migration was much smoother than others as a result of having a more stable family situation. Hasti's family, on the other hand, came to Norway almost 6 years ago. They all agreed that their first experience of moving to Greece and all the challenges they went through, helped them to settle down and find their ways better in Norway.

Although severity of the challenges differs from one family/person to another, everyone has had difficulties in their own way. Parvin found it difficult to learn the language although her husband and in-laws spoke Norwegian. It took her some time before she could get a certificate which she needed in order to enter university. Hasti used to have problems with her daughter who was 12 years old by the time they migrated to Norway (discussed in previous chapter). Despite the challenges of seeking asylum and the ones with her daughter, Hasti insisted that living in Norway has been nothing but a great experience for her and she loves the safety this country offers her especially as a single mother.

6.2.3 Phase Three; Facing Vast Results of the Battle in the Previous Phase

The experiences of research participants in phases three may also match Yerkes-Dodson Law (Yerkes & Dodson, 1908) which explains that performance increases with physiological or mental arousal or stress, but only up to a certain point. When levels of arousal become too high, performance decreases. Accordingly, even though some of the participants connected with their family members and found their ways, other stressors along the way kept pressuring them. These factors include difficulties to find a job after finishing PhD project or master's degree, not being accepted in the host society, visa issues, etc that lots of the participants faced. Generally, an unstable life with huge responsibilities made some of them collapse after years of resistance against high degrees of stress. Sara, who now holds a job related to her studies, is one of the women who said that:

Exposure to stress for a very long time, in addition to not having a high self-confidence led me to suffer from anxiety. It took our family 11 years to get our Norwegian passports because we had to travel to USA for my husband's job for a while. It was a good experience but resulted in problems related to issuing Norwegian citizenships. It was such a nerve-wracking process.

Similarly, Simin said that despite the progress her family has had since moving to Norway, she feels the pressure of mastering the language, finding a job to assist financially, etc that is affecting her mental and physical status.

On the other hand, many participants are satisfied with the results they got after the initial years of migration. Parvin is among those who is happy about her life in Norway and calls the challenges “the price” one should pay to achieve a position in a new country. Ziba is also satisfied about their decision to leave Iran. She said:

We had the hardest time after leaving the country. It was not an easy process to get to Norway and even living here, was not as easy as we thought, but we are happy that our children could enjoy raising up in a liberal country. It would be a dream for them to do the things they do now, if we were living in Iran.

6.3 Integration Strategies and the Level of Integration

A great part of interviews with parents was dedicated to the ways in which they integrated into Norwegian society and how successful they have been in doing so. Most of my participants somehow used the same strategies but when it came to whether they feel integrated or not, the answers were either yes or no. Among the 17 parents I interviewed, only 2 of them (one family) stated their situation relatively. This was such an amazing finding for me for I did not expect them to have a “black or white” perspective over the topic. Previous studies indicate that a sense of belonging to one or more ethnic groups in combination with positive attitudes towards the cultural values of the new country is much more effective than a sense of belonging to just one culture (Vedder, et al., 2006). Consequently, if minority group does not grow positive attitudes and belonging to the new country’s culture, the development of integration process will be harder to achieve (Ibid).

When one wants to initiate a conversation or any kind of relationship, it is significant to find commonalities. However, some of the participants agreed that Norwegians are not good at that (Farzaneh, Amir, etc). Language acquisition is one strategy to cope with the demands of the new country for both adults and children (Vedder, et al., 2006). Therefore, one way to integrate is to be patient with them and talk about your culture, country, etc, said Hasti. Ziba pointed to another strategy that her family used for better integration. She said:

For families with kids, one way of finding friends is to be active in after school programs like football because these are places where families gather and there is a high chance that you can find friends since your kids and their activities, is a common thing you can talk about.

But not all migrants have children. Even if they do, not all parents have the opportunity to accompany their children. Ziba has a solution for them:

Working voluntarily and doing group sports are also positive options. These are continuous activities. So, you have the chance to develop a relationship since you meet people more

often. Besides, use all the opportunities you get to mingle with them. If there is an event, go there. Invite them for a coffee or something.

The intersection among all above-mentioned strategies is that as a foreigner, one should be the initiative of the interactions. Waiting for Norwegians to take the first step, is not the best recipe. I asked my participants how these strategies worked for them. I interpreted their answers as feeling excluded from Trondheim community. They think here is a local city rather than more international cities such as Oslo and Bergen. Tajfel (1981) wrote that when there are unequal relations and oppression between majority and minority group as well as impermeable group boundaries, exclusion of minority group happens. I interpreted from the conversations with my participants that they believe in their exclusion because of how they are treated. Based on participants' experiences, an instance of unequal relations between majority and minorities in Norwegian society could be locals not opening up or showing common interest to socialize with immigrants. Ramin who has had a hard time integrating into the society said:

They are not welcoming. Whatever the reason is, the effect it has on foreigners is deep. Especially it is harder for people who are a bit older or refugees like me; they feel unwanted and useless while there is a high chance they have something to deliver.

Second-class citizen is the concept Vedder, et al. (2006) introduced in their paper. They set the goal of their paper to inform every relevant person about ethno-cultural diversity in European societies. I interpreted that my participants feel like second class citizens after many years of living in Norway. However, not all of them had the same opinion. For example, Simin refers to Norwegians as kind and supportive. Her positive viewpoint of locals is an example of individual differences in terms of experiences of migration. As mentioned earlier, acceptance of change and value system of the host society, are key when it comes to mingling with locals. In this regard, Lida said:

After learning the language and trying to find social codes in Norwegian culture, it was easy for me to integrate. For example, when you see that everyone at work speaks with a low voice, you also try to keep up with it. You should be ready for change. I would say see and pay attention to their behaviour and ask if you don't realize something. I did that a lot. The reason was that I was convinced that you cannot just use the material this country provides you and then behave like you don't live here. You should boost your personal and social standards as well as life standards.

Parvin and her husband, Faraz, were the only couple who expressed their relative feelings towards integration and living in Norway in general. They said:

In Norway, there are things we like and dislike. We don't think it's a perfect country but it's a good place to have a family. Parvin also added:

I think it's normal that they don't welcome us with open arms. We don't do that in Iran to Afghan immigrants. We shouldn't blame them for everything I suppose.

To summarise, although there are several situations that enlarge or diminish immigrants' agency to integrate, I believe the judgments and attributions immigrants make towards the host society are good indicators of whether they have been successfully integrated into the society or not.

6.4 Advantages of Living in Norway

Most parents' answers regarding advantages of living in Norway relate to their children. It means that they prioritize their children's needs first. Additionally, most of parents' answers were the same as children's. There are, however, differences in the details and the way they presented their justifications.

6.4.1 Peaceful Environment

It comes to no surprise that living under stressful circumstances due to unstable status of Iran, made daily life difficult for adult participants. Thus, they are satisfied to get away from this complicated situation although many of them are still emotionally attached to their families and their home country. However, not all the participants traversed the same path in coming to Norway, some like Yalda's family had different motivations. Ramin said:

We had to leave Iran due to my political activities. Our lives were miserable; we were not safe there. The decision to leave the country with three kids and requesting a refuge case, was not easy either but we had to do it, and even though it was a long way to Norway, and it hasn't been perfect here either, I'm happy that we did it.

6.4.2 Educational System

This is another common advantage mentioned by both children and parents. While children pointed to evaluation methods, parents' satisfaction for the most part refers back to the fact that their children never experience "Konkoo". It is a tough national test that determines which university and study program one can apply for. The demanding process of Konkoo takes at least 15 months of a child's life. Adult participants who went through this process as teenagers love the fact that their children must not suffer from the same stress as they did.

They also despise the type of learnings and learning process children have in Iran which contains many theories and unnecessary details learnt in a short amount of time by taking multiple tests. Educational system and learning in Norway, on the other hand, like most western countries is "much more collaborative, and examinations and assignments follow

different formats" (Ferguson, 2010, p. 31). For example, Sara, who was a teacher for many years in Iran said:

As a teacher I always loved this quote "I'm enchanted by the teacher who taught me how to think, not the thoughts" (Dr. Ali Shariati).⁵ It never was the case of the educational system in Iran. When I came here and my son went to school, I just realized what it means to teach children how to think. Then I started to work in kindergartens and schools where it became more obvious how different it is to be a student in Norway and Iran.

I think one result of such educational system as in Iran is students who can memorize loads of information but are unable to firmly develop ideas of their own.

6.4.3 Opportunity to "BE" a Child

This advantage is closely related to the educational system. A demanding educational system does not leave much time for students to play and enjoy free time. Even before school age, Iranian parents and society have certain expectations of children. For example, it is a common training that girls and boys have from a very young age to "act as a lady/man". This explicitly tells children to be less playful which is in complete contrast with the nature of childhood. Behrooz said:

My daughter was born and raised in Iran. Although we did our best in raising her, I think it would be better for her if she grew up here. She was 9 years old when we came here, and she just started to be a kid then. Before that in Iran, she was supposed to wear a hijab and do great in all her exams but when she said goodbye to strict exams, comparisons and unhealthy evaluations, I can tell that she became fresher than before.

This quote reflects upon the difference between a child and a teenager in Iran in terms of wearing a hijab -based on Islamic teachings- that is followed by certain expectations of a child. Such expectations are not always pleasant for children or their parents.

Parents who left Iran years ago but are in touch with their families, can vividly observe the difference in the way children are being considered and treated in Iran and Norway. For instance, Ziba compared two countries in this matter and said:

When I talk to my family in Iran, I thank God that my children had the opportunity to live as children. Rituals in Iran are becoming heavier and more strict every day, everyone wants to have the perfect child. So, they register their children in different classes. It gets worse in summers when children are supposed to relax and enjoy their holidays. The poor child's precious time is filled with piano lessons, gym hours, etc. There is no time for the

⁵ He is an Iranian revolutionary and sociologist and one of the most influential intellectuals of the 20th century in the country.

child to breathe. My children, especially Yalda, were lucky they didn't experience this competition.

I asked my participants if there is anything about raising a child in Norway that they would like to change. Most of them answered no; their reason was that children's learnings in Norway grow according to their age. They do not learn stuff that are useless to them. In fact, they learn by playing and experiencing. Simin was the only mother who disagreed with the amount of freedom children have in spending as much time with friends as they desire. This will be more discussed under disadvantages of living in Norway.

6.4.4 The Benefit of Independence

Speaking about children, independency is a sensitive topic. Its definition, to what extent parents should take responsibility for their children as they grow up and how to raise an independent child are few of the diverse topics that come to mind. Depending on the place, independency has different definitions and implications. Iran as an Islamic country situated in the global south, has a different idea about independency rather than Norway as a symbol of western ideals.

To that matter, the kind of independency that is admired and encouraged in western countries is considered to be not so appropriate or even forbidden depending on family and the culture in Iran. For example, there are families who would not let their adult daughters work because it would be a sign that the father has little dignity. A more obvious example would be that living with your parents is not an immature thing to do; on the other hand, youth are expected to live under their parents' roof until they get married. Therefore, marriage is the time when people are supposed to be responsible for themselves. This picture, however, has been challenged in recent years by youth who move to other cities for work or study and start living on their own. As Ziba said:

Here in Norway, kids learn to be independent from a young age. They understand that they are responsible for their own lives, thus they start to work as teenagers to get pocket money. In Iran, on the other hand, teenagers and youth are totally dependent on their families, they live with their parents and some of them even don't get a job as adults.

Dependency does not just concern children in Iranian society. It also applies to adults as in many parents continue to intrude into their children's personal lives even after they get married or have children of their own. Farimah did not experience having a child in Iran but has seen how families can interfere with the way their grandchildren are being raised.

It was hard raising two kids here without any help, but I am happy it happened because my husband and I were on board with each other and did not need to convince others not to interfere. Although grandparents, aunts and uncles have the children's best interest at

heart, it's good that they didn't get to interfere with our decisions. I think we have a stronger bond in our family today because it was a smaller unit that we could manage easily.

Living abroad equals less possibility for controlling parents to get involved in details of their children's lives which sometimes is appraised as a positive thing. Furthermore, as a result of many years of living in a different cultural system, one might adapt with the host societies' sets of values and criticize the social trends in their home country. Ziba thinks the effects of living in Norway on her thoughts, explain why she has less opinions in common with her family and friends in Iran.

In addition to the advantage of children standing on their own feet, adult participants are quite pleased with the knowledge Norwegian schools offer the children about their rights which assures the parents more when it comes to their children's safety. Therefore, parents not only allow but also encourage independency as Farzaneh said. Speaking of the rights, it is essential that children learn the rights of their parents, as well their own rights, said Sara:

Everything is about children's rights and less about their duties. We lose balance because children are kings and queens in this country. Families should have bigger roles than to just serve their children.

The last quotation brings the topic of disadvantages to the front that is discussed in the next part of the chapter.

6.5 Disadvantages of Living in Norway

The disadvantages that parents stated did not overlap with the ones children affirmed to a large degree. This is in my opinion because of the diverse challenges that different family members come across.

6.5.1 Agitated Parents

One aspect of cultural differences between Iran and Norway, is that Iranian parents are in control of their child's life to a great deal. For instance, they have a say in who their child is (not) allowed to be friends with. Usually, the child is expected to listen to the parents no matter what because the parents "know better". However, it is not the case in Norway. Parents might have ideas about their children's friends but cannot or do not force them to do what they want. This difference terrifies some parents such as Simin who says:

Sometimes I feel like children here don't take their parents into consideration. They have high self-confidence because at school, it's all about the importance of friends and independency which brings emotional detachment. I don't think Norwegian kids are as close to their families as what we like when they grow up.

Parents tend to have special beliefs about their children's peer relationships which are not necessarily consonant with the new society's values (Edwards, et al., 2006). For example, Norwegian parents put a strong value on their children's close, long-term relationships with peers (Aukrust, Edwards, Kumru, Knoche, & Kim, 2003), while for some Iranian parents, these values might have different levels of importance. Iranian parents on the other hand, prioritize the education and family relationships as the most important values. In this matter, parents' struggles with a child rearing method that suits Norwegian standards has a key role, too. Farzaneh said:

The question of to what extent I should have let my kids be free was so hard to find an answer for. Because I was not a teenager here, I didn't have a criteria to compare with.

The result of such dubiety could be either giving too much freedom to the children or becoming very strict as Manssor (Farzaneh's husband) states that anyways leaves a huge burden on parents' shoulders.

6.5.2 Preserved Society

Many of the participants complained about the difficulties they went through because Norwegians were not as helpful as they expected. For example, not voluntarily offering help or suggestions to newcomers as Farimah said. This of course could arise from the fact that people in Norway learn to be private from an early age and to not interfere or comment on stuff that don't affect them. Nevertheless, cultural maintenance, which is sought by the immigrants must be enabled and encouraged by the society (Vedder, et al., 2006). Sara is among those who complained about this:

Integration is like a two-way road. It requires both migrants and host society to work together but Norwegians are not helpful in that manner. They don't care if you're not integrated but they should. We are part of this country anyway.

Perhaps as I said earlier, an effective way to encourage ethnic Norwegians become more active in the integration process of immigrants, would be for the government to recognize immigrants' human rights. DeBono (2012) argues that (wrong) migration policies result in normalising "poor living and working conditions" of migrants.

6.5.3 A Society Resistant to Change

A country with immigrants from all over the world, is not only a physical home to them but should also make them feel "at home" (Ferguson, 2010). Feeling secure and safe applies to both physical and mental status of people. However, since Norway is becoming a multi-cultural country, there is a need to accept the change from both parties (migrants and local community) to better include migrants. Otherwise, there would not be such thing

as (successful) integration. It would be assimilation which means trying to replicate values of the new culture. Ramin claimed:

Norwegians want us to be like them. If you don't or can't do this, chances are not high for you to become accepted among them. I think this is disrespectful to other countries. A clear example is when you even don't get invited for job interviews because your name is not Norwegian or at least western. I know many foreigners who had to change their names to get a job. Its meaningless.

This is an example of assimilation which results in ones' cultural identity and values being lost or forgotten (Bhugra and Becker, 2005).

6.5.4 Norwegians' Negative Perspective of Migrants

Rysst (2015) explains that social classifications indicate dominating cultural values in a society. She agrees with Alghasi, Eriksen, and Ghorashi (2009, p.11) that these categories are not something "natural"; instead they are dynamic concepts that change from one time, place, and context to another. She then argues that words "Norwegian" and "foreigner" are classifications which are used by Norwegians all the time in Norway. This is one of the things that bother my participants the most. Peyman, Lida's husband said:

They look at foreigners as inferior people who should work for them. This is not how I would like to be perceived.

Berry, et al. (2006) report an increasing intolerance and impatience with immigrants' integration in Europe. Norway was one of the European countries where immigrant youth living there claim to suffer from discrimination (Ibid). Maybe in order to fix this situation, media and politics should come to the front as recommended in the next chapter.

6.6 summary

Ultimately, this chapter provides knowledge about migrant parents' experiences of social life and migration by drawing attention to the types of their daily challenges including cultural differences, effects of the challenges on individual life (e.g. stress) and family relationships (e.g. tensions between couples) as well as the strategies they used to overcome the challenges and mingle with Norwegian society, for instance learning the social codes and the language of the new society. I also outlined the advantages and disadvantages of living in Norway from parents' perspectives which overlapped with children's perceptions to a great degree.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion and Recommendations

The aim of this research project was to provide an insight of Iranian migrant families' perspectives about social life in Norway and how they integrate into the Norwegian lifestyle and society. The focus of the project was on both children and their parents to acquire a dynamic and trustworthy image of the topic and add to its validity and significance (Kuczynski, 2002).

Different data collection methods were used including focus group discussion, individual in-depth semi-structure interviews with informants and essay writing by children. Participants were not willing to voice-record the conversations, thus the content was written by the researcher at the same time of interviewing. Interviews were conducted in Persian and later translated into English by me. After analysing the data, I gained some findings which will be shortly discussed in this chapter.

In the following section, I summarise research findings regarding the research questions from introduction chapter. I followed various research questions for the present study however, there were three chief questions I sought to find answers for. In the first section, I will discuss the challenges that Iranian families go through on a daily basis after migration to Norway. The following section describes the effects these challenges have had on children and parents both on individual and family levels. The third section focuses on participants' experiences and strategies for integration into Norwegian society. The last part of the chapter is dedicated to the limitations for this research as well as recommendations for future research and policy making.

7.1 Summary of Main Findings

7.1.1 Challenges of Living in Norway for Children and Patents

Children and their parents come across different challenges and issues every day. For the sake of this chapter, I decided to interweave the challenges in the text instead of outlining them separately.

Language acquiring seemed to be the first challenge when parents were asked about daily challenges. They reported the language barrier as the first issue after moving to a new non-English speaking country. Women in general, were more successful in learning the language since they used *small talk* to overcome their fear of speaking Norwegian. Children, however, adapted much easier than adults, generally speaking. For instance, language learning was a smoother process for them in comparison to their parents. For those who came to Norway at an older age, learning the language helped with having more positive daily experiences and relationships in sports and schools. Whereas children who were born or raised here, did not notify language as a challenge.

Both groups of children and their parents nevertheless struggled with having sustained long-term relationships with Norwegian society. Social and cultural blending has not been an easy task for the participants. Especially for children who continuously have "one foot in two cultures" (Back, 2008, p. 446). Cultural differences and culture chock have made the process of settlement and integration difficult for the participants. The reason as Edwards et al. (2006) point out is that culture influences interactions and social codes of everyday life which take time to be learnt. Participants tried to overcome this process by utilizing solutions such as learning the language or assimilation strategies. However, based on participants' experiences, these strategies are only "necessary and not enough" for integrating in the society. Nonetheless, most participants agreed that one ought to accept "the change" or acculturation process as inevitable parts of defeating cultural challenges. Personal traits such as openness to change or having common interests with locals are advantages/agency thickers that helped some of child or adult participants undergo a less demanding acculturation process.

Although, those participants who underwent the process of change and adjusted to the Norwegian social and cultural norms on a higher level tend to attribute more positive perspectives about life in Norway, all participants ultimately appreciate the welfare and educational system as well as the peace that living here has brought into their lives.

Another important challenge for all participants that interrelates with cultural differences was fulfilling emotional needs in forms of making friends and gaining social support. Families and friends are key assets to daily life in Iranian culture. Therefore, losing close connections with them may put a mental and emotional burden on people's shoulders. Moreover, the procedure of befriending someone in Norway takes time and requires the knowledge of social and cultural codes in order to be able to form deep and meaningful friendships. In case of children, parents play a key role in their social inclusion/exclusion by developing their social skills and peer relationships (Micklewright, 2002; Yu et al., 2011). Yet, adult participants struggled with challenges at the beginning of life as immigrants in Norway which kept them too busy to spend enough time with their children. Accordingly, that may be a reason for why some children found making friends a burdensome task. Meanwhile, if one has not been successful in finding a supportive circle for themselves, the pressure of daily challenges deteriorates. Lack of socialization may also lead people to have restricted access to useful information and awareness of the rules and practical information which helps one learn and adjust to the host society on a greater scale.

Children's dependence on parents was rather a controversial topic in the study. Some parents praised the independent training that children receive in Norway while others

critiqued it to be a reason for children developing a closer bond with friends rather than parents.

A few of parents (women) pointed to strong religious faith as a challenge for their integration by restricting social connections. However, throughout the years, there was an alteration in participants' views by taking fewer religious beliefs. Therefore, a difference in religion was not found to be a serious challenge in this research.

7.1.2 Effects of Challenges on Children, Parents and Family Dynamics

I described effects of challenges on parents in three stages. It is, however, important to remember people's reactions to challenges, change daily going back and forth based on the situations. Despite this fact, I found it useful to divide the effects into stages as follows: moving away from family members, families fighting against challenges as a whole unit and facing results of challenges in the long run.

In the first stage participants started to feel the pressure of moving to a new country, losing long term social contacts and experiences of isolation. Entering a new work/study environment and unfamiliarity with settings all together made families especially parents grow interpersonal issues at home. At this point, parents felt the pressure of being stressed out and a few children experienced a drop in academic performances. In the second stage, participants strived to work through the stressors individually and as both couples/families trying to draw away from the problems created in stage one. Edwards, et al. (2006) discuss that family members learn to rely on each other to be able to leave behind the pressures and difficulties of immigration. The problems families dealt with in the previous stage vary from difficulty in learning the language to conflicts with their children. In the last stage, the participants confronted the results of their encounter with challenges. Based on how well the participants dealt with the challenges and whether they handled new arising challenges such as seeking jobs in a robust way or not, they were either satisfied or unhappy with the results. I assume that it is in this stage where the issue of integration becomes more relevant; as positive or negative perspectives that people possess about the host society during long years of living there, both originate from and depend on the experiences they gather throughout these stages.

Talking about effects of migration on children, Edwards, et al. (2006) suggests that children's attributions towards events as well as their personal traits and developmental stages are linked to the way immigration affects them. Child participants in this study struggled with stress and sadness after migrating to Norway which could be either a result of ignorance and failing to form close friendships at school, or their belonging to minority group that does not dominate the new surroundings. Some of them, mostly those children who were older at the time of moving to Norway, also had a drop in academic

performances. This could be due to unfamiliarity with educational system or the feelings of strain due to family/siblings' controversies. Edwards, et al. (2006) distinguished these challenges from harmful to growth events. I think some challenges the children had with their families or at school eventually benefited them emotionally and socially whereas other experiences could be categorized as harmful events.

7.1.3 Integration and Strategies

Integrating into a new society or having a sense of belonging towards it are important and effective for immigrants' daily lives. If integration does not occur properly, immigrants would not develop positive perspective towards the home society (Vedder et al., 2006); negativity will be reinforced and this continues to become such a repetitive dysfunctional loop. Integration did not have a similar meaning or procedure for the participants of this research depending on their age and status. For the parents in this study it was a long and slow process, which might still be taking place, while for the children it happened much faster. As mentioned earlier, children learnt the language sooner than adults. Going to school and finding local friends, although harder for some of the children, eventually aided them to form friendships. Parents, on the other hand, tussled with integrating into the Norwegian society resulting in their rather negative perspectives about social life.

Considering strategies, parents used a wide range of strategies to aid themselves with integration, whereas children did not seem to actively utilize strategies; rather they engaged in normal everyday activities with children at their age and finally found their way through the situations. The parents applied approaches such as language acquisition, familiarising themselves with parents of their children's friends, voluntary work, sport activities (gym or hiking), etc. Regardless of the strategies, the parents felt that as a foreigner, they should always take the initiation in a social setting. Lots of adult participants recognize Norwegians as "not so helpful" people who not only distance themselves from foreigners, but also do not show enough interest in getting to know them. Participants claimed that Norwegians have a special way of "closeness" combined with negative and conservative perspectives towards foreigners that makes mingling with them a tough process. Adult participants also have a sense of being "second-class citizens" in local community of Trondheim which is connected to the exclusion concept (Vedder et al., 2006). However, not all parents felt the same. There were some of them who were positive about their experiences in Norway. As mentioned earlier, acceptance of change and learning new sets of values in host society play a key role in their satisfaction and better inclusion.

The degree to which children felt integrated or included, also depends on whether they were born and raised here or not. The children who were born and raised in Norway from an early age did not have much difficulty in integration. However, for those who came to

Norway at an older age, integration was a harder procedure. One reason could be the privilege of speaking the language almost like a native Norwegian and knowing the social/educational codes better than the second group.

Generally, for children, one key aspect of inclusion is the level of "sameness" to the host society. If one follows the same dress code, speaks or acts in a way that does not stand out from locals, there is a bigger chance that they are integrated and accepted by peers (Rysst, 2017). This could more or less be relevant to integration of adults, I believe. Many adult participants mentioned that if one is interested in the same things as Norwegians for example, food or hobbies, they would be accepted easier. However, it is not always as simple for adults as children to be similar to locals probably because they have already developed perspectives and interests of their own based on the original culture they were raised in.

As I said earlier, integration is close to the sense of belonging. Although, I did not directly ask questions about "identity", some conversations led children (both child groups) to share their attitudes with me about perceiving themselves as Iranian/Norwegians belonging to both countries and cultures. This finding is in line with Back's concept of "one foot in two cultures" (2008, p. 446) as well as Rysst's (2017) findings which suggest this may be a challenging position for children to be in as other locals might not recognize them as *Full Norwegians* for they are *different*.

Integration is a complex phenomenon. It is a mutual process that takes time to happen and requires both migrants and locals' efforts and awareness. Integration does include positive sense and perspective towards the place one lives in along with social life experiences and interactions, however there are some side aspects that influence integration such as personal judgments and feelings, attachments to one's roots, etc. All in all, no one can claim that integration is a fully positive or negative experience.

7.2 Recommendations

The findings of the study add new knowledge to the growing body of the research field of childhood studies concerning migrant children and families' experiences and challenges in the country they found themselves a new "home" in.

The present study was circulated around Iranian immigrant families in Trondheim and how they perceive the aspects of social life, most importantly integration process. Most families who participated in this research come from more or less the same social status in Iran and moved to Norway around the same time and even have similar vocational and educational situations here. This could be a limitation of the study and hence, further studies are encouraged to employ a wider range of participants to ensure the utilization of a plenary sample.

I believe the findings of this study, can introduce implications for policy making, as well. Norway is becoming a multi-cultural country, welcoming people from all around the world such as asylum seekers, researchers, students, etc. To assist immigrants with the integration process is a valuable goal that depends on multiple factors. These factors include responsibilities for both immigrants and host society (government and locals). On the governmental level, authorities should take the inclusion of immigrants into better consideration by increasing awareness about respecting people from other backgrounds. This could be done via the media which has a key role in reinforcing positive perspectives about cultural similarities and differences of foreigners (IOM, 2008).

Since 2010, the Norwegian government has started to inspect multiple aspects of immigration and integration policies including The Welfare and Migration Committee and The Inclusion Committee (Thorud et al., 2011, p.43). Besides, the government and municipalities have provided diverse sport, social and cultural activities for immigrants where they can familiarize themselves with other foreigners and learn about the Norwegian culture, nature, etc. These are certainly valuable steps in integrating immigrants; however, not all immigrants are aware of them. I did not hear the participants mention using such activities. One reason might be that most of the activities are designed for asylum seekers or children. The other reason lies in the fact that such services may not be brought to immigrants' attention properly. Accordingly, not all immigrants would be acquainted with them unless they are made aware of them. I assume that the integration process would have become more fluent especially for adult participants if they noticed and used these social services.

For this regard, I recommend developing such activities in a way that includes all immigrants regardless of their status, as well as proper declaration of them to hopefully make a huge difference assisting immigrants in integrating into Norwegian society.

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Appendices

Appendix A: NSD assessment form



NSD's assessment

Project title

Iranian families' perspectives about social life in Norway

Reference number

731029

Registered

04.06.2020 av Mahsa Rashidnejao - mahsara@stud.ntnu.no

Data controller (institution responsible for the project)

Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet / Fakultet for samfunns- og utdanningsvitenskap (SU) / Institutt for pedagogikk og livslang læring

Project leader (academic employee/supervisor or PhD candidate)

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Type of project

Student project, Master's thesis

Contact information, student

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Status

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Assessment (1)

26.06.2020 - Assessed

Our assessment is that the processing of personal data in this project will comply with data protection legislation, so long as it is carried out in accordance with what is documented in the Notification Form and attachments, dated 26 June 2020, as well as in correspondence with NSD. Everything is in place for the processing to begin.

NOTIFY CHANGES

If you intend to make changes to the processing of personal data in this project it may be necessary to notify NSD. This is done by updating the Notification Form. On our website we explain which changes must be notified. Wait until you receive an answer from us before you carry out the changes.

Appendix B: Parents' information & informed consent form

My name is Mahsa Rashidnejad and I am doing a research in Childhood Studies at Norwegian Centre for Child Research, NTNU. My research is related to Iranian families living in Trondheim. The purpose of my study is to understand and explore both Iranian children and parents' experiences in Norwegian society, their interaction and integration into the society, particularly, how to build up relationships and maintain family bonds and the possible challenges along the way.

I ask for your consent to gather information on your perspectives and experiences about certain social aspects of living in Norway. Additionally, based on Norwegian law, a study that involves children needs to be agreed upon by their parents. Hereby I ask for your permission. You have the right not to give permission to your child to participate in this study if your child does not wish to do that. However, if you agree, then the next step is to ask your child for their agreement, as well. I need informed consent of you and your child before starting my study. I will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with NTNU, NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation. Contact information for NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, are as followed:

email: (personverntjenester@nsd.no), telephone: [+47 55 58 21 17](tel:+4755582117).

My project's starting and finishing point would 01.09.2019 and 31.12.2020, respectively. During this period, your personal data taken from the fieldwork would be anonymously processing by the researcher. At the end of the project, all data would be removed.

I am mainly going to interview participants. We will have individual and group interviews; meaning that I will ask each participant some questions and we will discuss them first one by one and then in a group where all family members (who are participating in this study) are present and we will again go through the questions or discuss other issues raised in the interview session. In the case of interviewing children, you as parents or guardians have the right to see interview guides before they are used with a minor. Also, I will ask children to write an essay to me describing their own experiences of social life in Norway. The essay could be about finding friends, life at school or any related theme that children find easier to write about.

The participation of you and your child is valuable and helps me to find out more about the situation of Iranian families in the Norwegian society. Therefore, I am inviting you to be part of this study. We might discuss not only your ideas but also your child's or others' perspectives about migration and its related issues. The project will process data

about your ethnicity, philosophical and religious beliefs and I will assure you that all the information collected in this study will be kept confidential and will be put away. I will be the only person who has access to data provided by participants. No one else will access or use them by any means. I will keep the collected data in a storage room with a key that only I as the researcher have access to. While doing the research, I plan to transcribe data into digital form (word document) and to make sure that data is safe, only I will have the password to reach that computer.

In addition, you and your child have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without having to give me any explanation. All participants have the right to request access to, deletion/correction/limitation of their own personal data and data portability, as well as the right to send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer for the data controller or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority.

At the end of the research, anonymised data will be kept for a while to use for publications. Data will be erased after 1 year. You may contact me of the Following: email: mahsa.rashidnejad@yahoo.com and phone number: +47 96875970

You may also find my supervisor and faculty of education and lifelong learning's (institution responsible for the project) contact information as followed:

tatek.abebe@ntnu.no / +47 73596247, kontakt@ipl.ntnu.no / + 47 73 59 19 50

Please sign the certificate of consent below. If you need more information or have any questions now or further during the process of data gathering, please do not hesitate to contact/ask me. Certificate of consent:

I have read the foregoing information and I consent voluntarily for my child to participate in this study and understand that I have the right to ask any question to my satisfaction and withdraw him/her from the study at any time I or he/she wishes.

Name of participant (child) -----

Name of Parent or Guardian-----

Signature of Parent or guardian-----

Signature of participant-----

Date ----- (day/month/year)

ضمیمه اول: فرم اطلاعات و رضایت والدین

نام من مهسا رشیدنژاد است و در حال انجام تحقیقی در زمینه مطالعات دوران کودکی در مرکز تحقیقات کودک در دانشگاه علوم و فناوری نروژ هستم. هدف از مطالعه من درک و کاوش تجربیات کودکان ایرانی و والدین در جامعه نروژ، تعامل و ادغام آنها در جامعه، به ویژه، چگونگی ایجاد روابط و حفظ پیوندهای خانوادگی و چالش های احتمالی در این راه است. من برای جمع آوری اطلاعات در مورد دیدگاه ها و تجربیات شما در مورد برخی جنبه های اجتماعی زندگی در نروژ رضایت شما را جلب می کنم. علاوه بر این، براساس قانون نروژ، مطالعه ای که در مورد کودکان انجام می شود، باید مورد توافق والدین آنها قرار گیرد. بنابراین، بدینوسیله از شما اجازه می خواهم. اگر فرزند شما نمی خواهد این کار را انجام دهد، شما حق دارید به فرزندتان اجازه شرکت در این مطالعه را ندهید. با این حال، اگر موافق باشید، مرحله بعدی این است که از فرزند خود نیز بخواهید موافقت کند. من قبل از شروع مطالعه به رضایت آگاهانه شما و فرزندتان نیاز دارم. من اطلاعات شخصی شما را براساس رضایت شما پردازش می کنم.

بر اساس توافق با NTNU، NSD - مرکز نروژی برای داده های تحقیق AS ارزیابی کرده است که پردازش اطلاعات شخصی در این پروژه مطابق با قوانین محافظت از داده ها است. اطلاعات تماس - NSD مرکز نروژی برای داده های تحقیق AS، به شرح زیر است:

ایمیل: personverntjenester@nsd.no تلفن: +47 55 58 21 17

نقطه شروع و پایان پروژه من به ترتیب 01.09.2019 و 31.12.2020 است. در این دوره، اطلاعات شخصی شما که از کارهای میدانی گرفته شده اند، به طور ناشناس توسط محقق پردازش می شود. در پایان پروژه، تمام داده ها حذف می شوند.

من عمدتاً قصد دارم با شرکت کنندگان مصاحبه کنم. ما مصاحبه های فردی و گروهی خواهیم داشت. به این معنی که من از هر شرکت کننده چند سوال می پرسم و ما ابتدا یکی یکی در مورد آنها بحث خواهیم کرد و سپس در یک گروه که همه اعضای خانواده (که در این مطالعه شرکت می کنند) حضور دارند بحث خواهیم کرد و ما دوباره سوالات را مرور خواهیم کرد. در مورد مصاحبه با کودکان، شما به عنوان والدین یا سرپرستان حق دیدن راهنماهای مصاحبه قبل از استفاده از آنها با یک خردسال را دارید. همچنین، من از کودکان خواهش می کنم برای توصیف تجربیات زندگی اجتماعی خود در نروژ برای من مقاله بنویسند. مقاله می تواند در مورد یافتن دوستان، زندگی در مدرسه یا هر مضمون مرتبط باشد که نوشتن در آنها برای کودکان آسان تر است.

مشارکت شما و فرزندتان ارزشمند است و به من کمک می کند تا تحقیق را بنویسم و از وضعیت خانواده های ایرانی در جامعه نروژ بیشتر بدانم. بنابراین، شما را به عضویت در این مطالعه دعوت می کنم. ما ممکن است نه تنها ایده های شما بلکه دیدگاه های فرزندتان یا دیگران در مورد مهاجرت و مسائل مربوط به آن را مورد بحث قرار دهیم. این پروژه داده های مربوط به قومیت، عقاید فلسفی و مذهبی شما را پردازش می کند و به شما اطمینان می دهم که تمام اطلاعات جمع آوری شده در این مطالعه محرمانه نگه داشته می شود و کنار گذاشته می شود من تنها شخصی خواهم بود که به داده های ارائه شده توسط شرکت کنندگان دسترسی دارم. هیچ کس دیگری به هیچ وجه به آنها دسترسی نخواهد داشت یا از آنها استفاده نخواهد کرد.

هر اطلاعاتی در مورد شما یا فرزندتان به جای نام با شماره ای مشخص شده است. من داده های جمع آوری شده را در یک اتاق ذخیره سازی با یک کلید نگهداری می کنم که فقط من به عنوان محقق به آن دسترسی دارم. در حین انجام تحقیق، قصد دارم داده ها را به فرم دیجیتال رونویسی کرده و برای اطمینان از ایمن بودن داده ها، فقط من رمز ورود به آن رایانه را خواهم داشت.

علاوه بر این، شما و فرزندتان حق دارید در هر زمان و بدون اینکه توضیحی به من بدهید، از مطالعه خارج شوید. همه شرکت کنندگان حق درخواست دسترسی، حذف / اصلاح / محدود کردن داده های شخصی و قابلیت جابجایی داده های خود و همچنین حق ارسال شکایت به افسر حفاظت از داده را برای کنترل کننده داده یا اداره حفاظت از داده نروژ دارند. در پایان تحقیق، داده های ناشناس برای مدتی نگهداری می شود تا برای انتشارات استفاده شود. داده ها پس از 1 سال پاک می شوند.

شما می توانید از طریق زیر با من تماس بگیرید. ایمیل: mahsa.rashidnejad@yahoo.com، تلفن: +47 96 87 59 70

شما همچنین می‌توانید استاد راهنما و دانشکده آموزش و یادگیری مادام العمر (موسسه مسئول پروژه) اطلاعات تماس را به شرح زیر پیدا کنید:

kontakt@ipl.ntnu.no / + 47 73 59 19 50 ،tatek.abebe@ntnu.no / +47 73596247

لطفاً گواهی رضایت نامه را در زیر امضا کنید. اگر در جریان جمع‌آوری اطلاعات به اطلاعات بیشتری نیاز دارید یا در حال حاضر یا بیشتر سوالی دارید، لطفاً تماس بگیرید / از من سوال کنید. گواهی رضایت نامه:

من اطلاعات قبلی را خوانده‌ام و به‌طور داوطلبانه رضایت می‌دهم که فرزندم در این مطالعه شرکت کند و می‌فهمم که من حق دارم هر سوالی را که بخواهم بپرسم و او را از مطالعه خارج کنم.

نام شرکت کننده کودک:

نام پدر یا مادر:

امضای پدر یا مادر:

امضای کودک:

تاریخ:

Appendix C: children' information & informed consent form

My name is Mahsa Rashidnejad and I am doing a research in Childhood Studies at Norwegian Centre for Child Research, NTNU. My research is related to Iranian families who live in Trondheim. The purpose of my study is to understand and explore both children and their parents' experiences and perspectives about living in Norwegian society, their interaction and integration into the society particularly regarding social connections, family bonds and possible challenges along the way.

Therefore, I would like to invite you to participate in this study. Your valuable participation helps me to find out more about the situation of Iranian children in Norwegian society. We will talk about general issues of migration and might also discuss your ideas about your parents' or others' perspectives. The project will process data about your ethnicity, philosophical and religious beliefs. I will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with NTNU, NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation. Contact information for NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, are as followed:

email: (personverntjenester@nsd.no), telephone: [+47 55 58 21 17](tel:+4755582117).

My project's starting and finishing point would 01.09.2019 and 31.12.2020, respectively. During this period, your personal data taken from fieldwork would be anonymously processing by me. At the end of the project, all data would be removed. I am mainly going to interview you as participants. We will have individual and group interviews; meaning that I will ask each participant some questions and we will discuss them first one by one and then in a group where all family members (who are participating in this study) are present and we will again go through the questions or discuss other issues raised in the interview session. Also, I will ask you to write an essay to me describing your own experiences of social life in Norway. The essay could be about making friends, life at school or any subject you find easier to write about.

I assure you all data collected will be kept confidential. I will be the only person who has access to data provided by you. No one else will access or use them by any means . Collected data will be kept in a storage room with a key that only I as the researcher have access to. While doing the research, I plan to transcribe data into digital form (word document) and to make sure that data is safe, only I will have the password to reach that computer.

Your participation in this research is voluntary and you are free to refuse to participate. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without having to give me any Explanation. All participants have the right to request access to, deletion/correction/limitation of their own personal data and data portability, as well as the right to send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer for the data controller or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority. At the end of the research, anonymised data will be kept for a while to use for publications, but data will be erased after 1 year.

You may contact me of the Following: email: mahsa.rashidnejad@yahoo.com and phone number: +47 96875970

You may also find my supervisor and faculty of education and lifelong learning's (institution

responsible for the project) contact information as followed:

tatek.abebe@ntnu.no / +47 73596247, kontakt@ipl.ntnu.no / + 47 73 59 19 50

Please sign the certificate of consent below. If you need more information or have any questions now or further during the process of data gathering, please do not hesitate to contact/ask me Certificate of consent:

I have read the foregoing information and I consent voluntarily to participate in this study and understand that I have the right to ask any question to my satisfaction and withdraw from the study at any time I wish.

Name of participant -----

Age of participant -----

Signature of participant -----

Date ----- (day/month/year)

ضمیمه دوم: فرم اطلاعات و رضایت کودکان

نام من مهسا رشیدنژاد است و در حال انجام تحقیقی در زمینه مطالعات دوران کودکی در مرکز تحقیقات کودک در دانشگاه علوم و فناوری نروژ هستم. تحقیقات من مربوط به خانواده های ایرانی است که در تروندهایم زندگی می کنند. هدف از مطالعه من درک و بررسی تجربیات و دیدگاه های کودکان و والدین آنها در مورد زندگی در جامعه نروژ ، تعامل و ادغام آنها در جامعه به ویژه در مورد ارتباطات اجتماعی ، پیوندهای خانوادگی و چالش های احتمالی در این راه است.

بنابراین ، من می خواهم شما را به شرکت در این مطالعه دعوت کنم. مشارکت ارزشمند شما به من کمک می کند تا تحقیقات خود را بنویسم و در مورد وضعیت کودکان ایرانی در جامعه نروژ اطلاعات بیشتری کسب کنم. ما در مورد مسائل کلی مهاجرت صحبت خواهیم کرد و همچنین ممکن است ایده های شما در مورد دیدگاه والدین یا دیگران را مورد بحث قرار دهیم. این پروژه داده های مربوط به قومیت ، عقاید فلسفی و مذهبی شما را پردازش می کند.

من اطلاعات شخصی شما را براساس رضایت شما پردازش می کنم. براساس توافق با NSD، NTNU - مرکز نروژی برای داده های تحقیق AS ارزیابی کرده است که پردازش اطلاعات شخصی در این پروژه مطابق با قوانین محافظت از داده ها است. اطلاعات تماس NSD - مرکز نروژی برای داده های تحقیق AS ، به شرح زیر است:

ایمیل: personverntjenester@nsd.no تلفن: +47 55 58 21 17.

نقطه شروع و پایان پروژه من به ترتیب 01.09.2019 و 31.12.2020 است. در این دوره ، اطلاعات شخصی شما که از کارهای میدانی گرفته شده اند ، به طور ناشناس توسط محقق پردازش می شود. در پایان پروژه ، تمام داده ها حذف می شوند. در پایان پروژه ، تمام داده ها حذف می شوند. من به طور عمده قصد دارم به عنوان شرکت کننده با شما مصاحبه کنم. ما مصاحبه های فردی و گروهی خواهیم داشت. به این معنی که من از هر شرکت کننده چند سوال می پرسم و ما ابتدا یکی یکی در مورد آنها بحث خواهیم کرد و سپس در یک گروه که همه اعضای خانواده (که در این مطالعه شرکت می کنند) حضور دارند بحث خواهیم کرد و ما دوباره سوالات را مرور خواهیم کرد یا سایر موارد مطرح شده را بحث خواهیم کرد در جلسه مصاحبه. من اطمینان می دهم که تمام داده های جمع آوری شده محرمانه نگه داشته می شوند. من تنها شخصی خواهم بود که به داده های ارائه شده توسط شما دسترسی دارم. هیچ کس دیگری به هیچ وجه به آنها دسترسی نخواهد داشت یا از آنها استفاده نخواهد کرد. من از شماره کد برای برچسب گذاری و سازماندهی داده ها به جای نام شما استفاده می کنم. داده های جمع آوری شده در یک اتاق ذخیره سازی با یک کلید نگهداری می شود که فقط من به عنوان محقق به آن دسترسی دارم. در حین انجام تحقیق ، قصد دارم داده ها را به فرم دیجیتال رونویسی کرده و برای اطمینان از ایمن بودن داده ها ، فقط رمز ورود به آن رایانه را داشته باشم.

مشارکت شما در این تحقیق داوطلبانه است و شما می توانید از شرکت در این کار خودداری کنید. شما حق دارید هر زمان بخواهید از تحصیل انصراف دهید بدون اینکه به من توضیحی بدهید. همه شرکت کنندگان حق درخواست دسترسی ، حذف / اصلاح / محدود کردن داده های شخصی و قابلیت جابجایی داده های خود و همچنین حق ارسال شکایت به افسر حفاظت از داده را برای کنترل کننده داده یا اداره حفاظت از داده نروژ دارند. در پایان تحقیق ، داده های ناشناس برای مدتی نگهداری می شود تا برای انتشارات استفاده شود ، اما داده ها پس از 1 سال پاک می شوند.

شما می توانید از طریق زیر با من تماس بگیرید: ایمیل: mahsa.rashidnejad@yahoo.com ، تلفن: 96 87 59 70 .+47

شما همچنین می توانید استاد راهنما و دانشکده آموزش و یادگیری مادام العمر (موسسه مسئول پروژه) اطلاعات تماس را به شرح زیر پیدا کنید:

tatek.abebe@ntnu.no / +47 73596247 ،kontakt@ipl.ntnu.no / + 47 73 59 19 50

گواهی رضایت نامه: من اطلاعات قبلی را خوانده ام و داوطلبانه رضایت می دهم که در این کار شرکت کنم و درک می کنم که من حق دارم هر سوالی را برای رضایت خودم بپرسم و در هر زمان که بخواهم از مطالعه انصراف دهم.

نام شرکت کننده:

سن شرکت کننده:

امضا:

تاریخ:

Appendix D: Interview guide for research with children

Greetings, introducing myself

A quick overview of the research topic, objectives and participant rights

Estimations of time

Questions for children who are born and raised in Norway:

- 1- Tell me about yourself (name, age, place of birth or any other information you are willing to share at this point).
- 2- What do you think about living in Norway as someone with an Iranian background?
- 3- What kind of differences do you think you have in comparison to your Norwegian friends regarding family setting, relationships, food, language, etc?
- 4- What is your experience of making friends and peer relationships at school, in the neighbourhood, etc?
- 5- What kind of challenges have you had in social life here?
- 6- What are the influences of these challenges on you or your family unit?
- 7- How did you manage these challenges?
- 8- How and with whom do you usually talk about your personal experiences of daily challenges?
- 9- If you have been in Iran before, what do you think about life there in comparison to Norway as a child?
- 10-What has been your best/worst experience in social life/family life after migration?
- 11-How successful do you think you have been in integrating yourself into Norwegian society?
- 12-How do you think Norwegians have helped you to integrate and what can they do better in this regard?

Questions for children who were born in Iran and migrated to Norway at an older age:

- 1- Tell me about yourself (name, age, place of birth, when you moved to Norway or any other information you are willing to share at this point).
- 2- What do remember about living in Iran? (How was life in Iran?)
- 3- What do you think about your social life in Norway?
- 4- Can you tell me what you miss about social life in Iran?
- 5- Can you explain your experience in making friends since you came here?
- 6- What was the effect of migration on you as a child?
- 7- How do you think migration changed your family relations with parents/siblings?

- 8- How do you find it to talk about your feelings or experiences with your family/friends?
- 9- What kind of challenges do you come across on a daily basis in Norwegian social settings?
- 10-What is effect of the challenges on you personally and your family in general?
- 11-What has been your best/worst experience in social life/family life after migration?
- 12-How successful do you think you have been in integrating yourself into Norwegian society?
- 13-How do you think Norwegians have helped you to integrate and what can they do better in this regard?

ضمیمه سوم: راهنمای مصاحبه با کودکان

سلام و احوالپرسی، معرفی خودم

مروری سریع بر موضوع تحقیق، اهداف و حقوق شرکت کنندگان

تخمین زمان

سوالات برای کودکانی که در نروژ بدنیا آمده یا بزرگ شده اند:

- 1- در مورد خودتان (نام، سن، محل تولد یا هر اطلاعات دیگری که می خواهید در این مرحله به اشتراک بگذارید) برای من بگویید.
- 2- نظر شما در مورد زندگی در نروژ به عنوان فردی با سوابق ایرانی چیست؟
- 3- چه نوع اختلافاتی وجود دارد بنابراین شما فکر می کنید در مقایسه با دوستان نروژی خود در زمینه تنظیم خانواده، روابط، غذا، زبان و غیره اختلاف دارید؟
- 4- تجربه شما از دوست یابی و روابط همسالان در مدرسه، محله و غیره چیست؟
- 5- در زندگی اجتماعی در اینجا چه نوع چالش هایی داشته اید؟
- 6- تأثیر این چالش ها بر شما یا خانواده شما چیست؟
- 7- چگونه این چالش ها را مدیریت کردید؟
- 8- معمولاً چگونه و با چه کسی درباره تجربیات شخصی خود از چالش های روزمره صحبت می کنید؟
- 9- اگر قبلاً در ایران بوده اید، در مورد زندگی در آنجا در مقایسه با نروژ از کودکی چه نظری دارید؟
- 10- بهترین / بدترین تجربه شما در زندگی اجتماعی / زندگی خانوادگی بعد از مهاجرت چه بوده است؟
- 11- فکر می کنید در ادغام خود در جامعه نروژ چقدر موفق بوده اید؟
- 12- فکر می کنید نروژی ها چگونه به شما در ادغام کمک کرده اند و چه کاری می توانند در این زمینه بهتر انجام دهند؟

سوالات برای کودکانی که در ایران بدنیا آمده اند و در سن بالاتر به نروژ آمده اند:

- 1- در مورد خودتان بگویید (نام، سن، محل تولد، چه زمانی به نروژ نقل مکان کردید یا هر اطلاعات دیگری که می خواهید در این مرحله به اشتراک بگذارید).
- 2- از زندگی در ایران چه چیزی به یاد می آورید؟ (زندگی در ایران چگونه بود؟)
- 3- نظر شما در مورد زندگی اجتماعی خود در نروژ چیست؟
- 4- می توانید به من بگویید که از زندگی اجتماعی در ایران چه چیزهایی را از دست می دهید؟
- 5- شما تجربه خود را در دوست یابی از زمان آمدن به اینجا توضیح می دهید؟
- 6- مهاجرت در کودکی چه تأثیری بر شما داشت؟
- 7- فکر می کنید مهاجرت چگونه روابط خانوادگی شما را با والدین / خواهر و برادر تغییر داده است؟
- 8- چگونه پیدا کردید که درباره احساسات یا تجربیات خود با خانواده / دوستان خود صحبت کنید؟
- 9- در محیط های اجتماعی نروژ به طور روزانه با چه نوع چالش هایی روبرو می شوید؟
- 10- چالش ها چه تأثیری بر شما شخصاً و خانواده شما دارند؟
- 11- بهترین / بدترین تجربه شما در زندگی اجتماعی / زندگی خانوادگی بعد از مهاجرت چه بوده است؟
- 12- فکر می کنید در ادغام خود در جامعه نروژ چقدر موفق بوده اید؟
- 13- فکر می کنید نروژی ها چگونه به شما در ادغام کمک کرده اند و چه کاری می توانند در این زمینه بهتر انجام دهند؟

Appendix E: Interview guide for research with adults

Greetings, introducing myself

A quick overview of the research topic, objectives and participant rights

Estimations of time

- 1- Tell me about yourself (name, age, place of birth, when you moved to Norway and any other information you are willing to share at this point).
- 2- How was your family situation at the time of migration? (were you married, did you have children, etc)
- 3- How did you find social life in Norway when you first moved here and what were some of your initial experiences of social contacts with Norwegians?
- 4- How do you think your perspective of social life/interactions have changed after years of living here?
- 5- How did migration affect your family life/interactions with your spouse and children?
- 6- What were the main challenges for you after migration?
- 7- What were the impacts of challenges on you and your family?
- 8- How did you manage the challenges?
- 9- How important it is for you to stay attached to traditions and habits of living in Iran?
- 10- In what ways did your opinions change about respecting Iranian traditions regarding family settings and child rearing by living in Norway?
- 11- How do you think child rearing is different in Iran and Norway?
- 12- What are the similarities/differences of living in Iran and Norway as in family or social settings/relationships?
- 13- How successful do you think you have been in integrating yourself or your family into Norwegian society?
- 14- How do you think Norwegians have helped you to integrate and what can they do better in this regard?

ضمیمه چهارم: راهنمای مصاحبه برای تحقیق با بزرگسالان

سلام و احوالپرسی، معرفی خودم

مروری سریع بر موضوع تحقیق، اهداف و حقوق شرکت کنندگان

تخمین زمان

- 1- در مورد خودتان بگویید (نام، سن، محل تولد، چه زمانی به نروژ مهاجرت کردید و هر اطلاعات دیگری که می خواهید در این مرحله به اشتراک بگذارید).
- 2- در زمان مهاجرت وضعیت خانواده شما چگونه بود؟ (آیا ازدواج کرده بودید، بچه دار شدید و غیره)
- 3- چگونه زندگی اجتماعی خود را در نروژ یافتید وقتی برای اولین بار به اینجا نقل مکان کردید و برخی از تجربیات اولیه شما در ارتباطات اجتماعی با نروژی ها چه بوده است؟
- 4- فکر می کنید بعد از سالها زندگی در اینجا دیدگاه شما از زندگی اجتماعی / تعاملات چگونه تغییر کرده است؟
- 5- مهاجرت چه تاثیری بر زندگی خانوادگی / تعاملات شما با همسر و فرزندان شما داشت؟
- 6- چالش های اصلی شما بعد از مهاجرت چه بود؟
- 7- تأثیرات چالش ها بر شما و خانواده شما چه بود؟
- 8- چالش ها را چگونه مدیریت کردید؟
- 9- چقدر برای شما مهم است که به سنت ها و عادت های زندگی در ایران پایبند باشید؟
- 10- نظرات شما در مورد احترام به سنت های ایرانی در زمینه تنظیم خانواده و تربیت فرزند با زندگی در نروژ از چه راه هایی تغییر کرد؟
- 11- به نظر شما تربیت کودک در ایران و نروژ چه تفاوتی دارد؟
- 12- شباهت ها / تفاوت های زندگی در ایران و نروژ در محیط / روابط خانوادگی یا اجتماعی چیست؟
- 13- فکر می کنید در ادغام خود یا خانواده در جامعه نروژ چقدر موفق بوده اید؟
- 14- فکر می کنید نروژی ها چگونه به شما در ادغام کمک کرده اند و چه کاری می توانند در این زمینه بهتر انجام دهند؟

Appendix F: Interview guide for focus group discussions

Greetings, introducing myself

A quick overview of the research topic, objectives and participants rights

Estimations of time

- 1- What do you think of your status as an Iranian family in Norwegian society?
- 2- What are the challenges of living in Norway on your family that comes from a different background?
- 3- In what ways did the challenges affect your family members?
- 4- How did the challenges affect your family interactions?
- 5- How did you as a family unit try to solve and manage the challenges?
- 6- How well do you think your family has been in integration process into Norwegian society?
- 7- How strong are the Iranian background and values in your family and how are they implemented in your relationships?
- 8- How do you think your family relationships or your opinions about multiple aspects of life have changed after years of living in Norway?

ضمیمه پنجم: راهنمای مصاحبه برای بحث های گروه متمرکز

سلام و احوالپرسی، معرفی خودم

مروری سریع بر موضوع تحقیق ، اهداف و حقوق شرکت کنندگان

تخمین زمان

- 1- نظر شما در مورد وضعیت خود به عنوان یک خانواده ایرانی در جامعه نروژ چیست؟
- 2- چالشهای زندگی در نروژ در خانواده شما که از یک زمینه متفاوت ناشی می شود چیست؟
- 3- چالش ها از چه طریقی بر اعضای خانواده شما تأثیر گذاشتند؟
- 4- چالش ها چگونه بر تعاملات خانوادگی شما تأثیر گذاشت؟
- 5- شما به عنوان یک خانواده چگونه سعی در حل و مدیریت چالش ها داشتید؟
- 6- فکر می کنید خانواده شما چقدر در روند ادغام در جامعه نروژ بوده اند؟
- 7- پیشینه و ارزشهای ایرانی در خانواده شما چقدر قوی است و چگونه در روابط شما پیاده می شود؟
- 8- فکر می کنید بعد از سالها زندگی در نروژ روابط خانوادگی یا نظرات شما درباره چندین جنبه از زندگی چگونه تغییر کرده است؟

