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**THE ROLE OF CHRISTIAN ORGANIZATIONS IN PROMOTING SOCIAL  
INTEGRATION OF AFRICAN IMMIGRANTS IN TRONDHEIM**

A Case of Betel Pentecostal and Victorious Faith Ministry International Churches in  
Trondheim, Norway

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**Dedication**

This work is dedicated to God for His Grace towards me and to my dear husband for his encouragement and endless support to make this work a success.

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## **Abstract**

Religious institutions such as churches are known to show some solidarity to newcomers in the society. The church is an arena where people who come from different backgrounds are welcomed and given the opportunity to fellowship together based on shared faith and values. They provide a space for newcomers to interact and connect with different people. Churches may therefore provide a platform through which social capital is generated that immigrants may use to facilitate their social integration into their new society.

The present study was aimed to explore the role Christian organisations play in promoting social integration of African immigrants in Trondheim. The study was conducted in Betel Pentecostal (BPC) and Victorious Faith Ministry International (VFMT) churches in Trondheim.

The study made use of qualitative research methodology in data collection and analysis. Semi-structured interviews, observation and focus group discussions were the main methods of data collection. The respondents consisted of the main pastors and associates of both churches, leaders of different groups within both churches and other congregational members. To analyse the data, the researcher employed a thematic coding method which relied on patterns and themes as basic descriptive components.

In the analysis, the study draws on the concept of social capital to discuss the role BPC and VFMI churches have played in promoting social integration defined in this thesis as the social, economic, cultural, religious and political exchanges faced by Christian immigrants of African background in Trondheim. It examines whether such exchanges have actually helped the Christian immigrants to integrate in Trondheim.

The study reveals that, the churches provide stability, comfort, and act as a foundation for social networks through which members can access jobs, information, lasting friendships, new skills, and vital services. By participating in various activities of the churches, members can build a sense of belonging, feel valued and develop long lasting friendship on the principle of trust and trustworthiness, often described as social capital. In this sense, the churches play an important and often underestimated role in promoting social integration of African immigrants in Trondheim, Norway.

**Key words: Social integration, Christian organisation, church, African immigrants, Trondheim.**

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## List of Abbreviations

BPC	Betel Pentecostal Church
CCN	Christian Council of Norway
EU	European Union
ISU	International Student Union
KIA	Kristent Interkulturelt Arbeid
KLF	Kristent Leadership Forum
MCN	Multicultural Church Network
NAV	Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration
NRD	Norwegian Red Cross
VFMI	Victorious Faith Ministry International.

## **Chapter 1. General Introduction**

Historically, immigration has constituted a topic of global political importance and its history is as old as the human existence. Immigration is the process through which individuals travel to a country for the purpose of becoming citizens of that country (Boucher and Studies, 2020, Zaiceva, 2004). Immigration is also considered as an international movement of people to a new country where they do not possess citizenship in order to settle there as permanent residents and take up employment as migrant workers or as foreign or guest workers (Schuck, 2018).

Immigration has contributed to the presence of diverse societies in many countries as many people increasingly choose to live in different countries and settings (Castles et al., 2013). Globalization has made it flexible for industry and service producers' workforce to move, work and live beyond borders thereby contributing to the increasing levels of migration (Li and internationale, 2003). Globalization has not only led to a widening socio-economic disparity but has provided an incentive for people to leave their own countries and to seek opportunities elsewhere (Perrons, 2004).

Although the history of migrations is as long as that of humankind, it is still thought to be high on the political agenda presenting challenges of various magnitudes (Jackson et al., 2016). As travel and communication have become more accessible and easier, migration today is quite flexible and maybe a life-time issue for many who move from one country to another for a period of time and then returning or moving to another (Hamel, 2009).

Immigration is known to exert some degree of pressure on the receiving countries (Schaeffer, 1993, Zaiceva, 2004). Amongst the many challenges' immigration is seen to pose to the receiving countries, integrating the migrants into their host societies is perhaps the most difficult (Rubin, 2012). The process of integration is usually aimed at achieving some degree of equality where the immigrants as much as the natives enjoy the right to accommodation, education, health, and other basic social, economic, cultural, religious, and political amenities. Integration can therefore be viewed as a long-lasting process of which migrants become accepted into a new country or society either as individuals or as a group (Castles et al., 2013).

The integration process typically means that the newcomer learns the new language, understand her rights, and can access higher positions and statuses. Creating a personal



relation with members of the new country and developing a sense of belonging and identification towards the immigrant society are equally important integration factors.

Host countries usually takes the responsibility of settling migrants and helping them to be productive. These process puts a lot of pressure on the resources of the host country. Given the scope of migration, many governments around the world are now reviewing their immigration policies and including stringent laws (Dauvergne, 2008, Castles and Studies, 1995).

The European response has not been any different as the continent has ensured the increasing extension of border controls, the employment of military techniques of surveillance with huge numbers of detentions and expulsions (Jackson et al., 2016, Boswell, 2003, Pettigrew, 1998). The European Union (EU) is therefore focused on security and border control rather than on legal and welfare programs that will integrate migrants into their societies (McMichael, 2016). The gap between the discourse of activists and academics with that of politicians as to what constitutes adequate progress towards social integration still exists (Jackson et al., 2016).

Nevertheless, it will be fair to say that EU through her legal and political framework confers rights and entitlements to migrants.

The churches of Europe like in many other countries are not remote to the realities of immigration. Migration contributes to a more diverse Christian presence in Europe as well as to a more diverse religious landscape (Adogame, 2013). Through migration, minority churches such as the Protestant Churches in Italy and Ireland, the Roman Catholic Church in Sweden, the Orthodox Churches in France, and the Independent and Pentecostal churches are growing (Jackson et al., 2016). Although there are many instances where the churches and their related agencies have provided the necessary platform for the social integration of migrants, the church as a social institution can equally be guilty of the reluctance of facilitating the social integration of migrants (Adogame, 2013, Briggs, 2004).

Norway just like many other high-income countries has witness increasing number of immigration flows in the past decade. A report titled “White Paper” released in May 2016 states that, at the beginning of 2016 there were 700,000 immigrants in Norway as well as 150.000 children born to immigrants (Meld.St.30, 2015, 2016). This means that about 16

percent of the total Norwegian population is of immigrant background. Out of the 700,000 immigrants, the report further states that about 188,000 persons had a refugee background, with the largest group of immigrants coming from Iraq, Somalia, and Eritrea. If one were to go by this report, it will be fair to say that there is the presence of a significant population of African immigrants in Norway.

In Norway, like many other receiving countries, integration entails that the society should be tolerant and diverse. Integration is usually aimed at achieving some degree of equality in the social, cultural, economic, religious, and political dimensions of a society. There is thus need for the structures to work for every person to enable them to have equality in outcomes and obligation regardless of their ethnic background, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or functional ability.

The form of integration referred to in this study is “social integration” defined as an inclusionary process with the goal of providing equality in outcomes for immigrants and the natives of their receiving society (Asselin et al., 2006). The definition rests on the assumption that, the more people become integrated, the more likely it is for them to improve their life chances (United Nations, 2017).

The goal of the social integration policy in Norway like in many other receiving countries, is to ensure that newly arrived immigrants are quickly able to contribute to the system and participate in building the society. The Norwegian integration policy works to facilitate these processes so as to enable the migrants to become productive as quick as possible and limit their dependence on cash and other benefits. Early introduction to Norwegian language courses, education and training programs as well as the labour market are all initiatives aimed at reducing pressure on the state social structures (Meld.St.30, 2015, 2016).

As far as Norway is concerned, much has been documented in the literature with emphasis of the role the government and non-governmental institutions play in the social integration of migrants in the country. Organisations and institutions such as the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV), The Norwegian Red Cross Society (NRD), the local councils and the International Student Union (ISU) are regular studies as they are leading bodies of integration processes in Norway. Less attention has been paid to religious institutions, and specifically churches in promoting the social integration of immigrants.

Religion can be argued has been an important factor in the growth, development, and integration in many countries. The history of integration in countries like the USA, Canada,

Britain, Australia, South Africa etc is known to be linked to religious movements that later gave birth to various forms of political and social protests exerting much pressure on the states to review their policies on integration (Greeley, 1997). In varying degrees, religion is still recognised as an important element of integration in these countries (Tossutti, 2006). In Norway, just like many other countries, religion has been an important factor in the history and development of the country (Nilsen, 2010). Today Norway prides herself largely as a Christian state, observing many events of the Christian calendar as a nation. There are also presently many Christian organisations in the country. Despite this, little is known about the role these Christian organizations play in the social integration of immigrants in the Norwegian society.

Christian organisations can provide an arena that promotes and build social integration (Fangen and Mohn, 2010). They can provide immigrants with an entry point into a new society, which is a critical component of integration. Christian organisations may also influence and promote social structures that can facilitate an immigrant's integration into a new place and create a strong sense of belonging in the community. Foley and Hoge (2007), in their study titled "Religion and the New Immigrants in America" states that, Christian organisations can provide a special place in the life of an incoming migrant by providing opportunities of fast ties through their teachings and belief for certain values (Foley and Hoge, 2007). Fangen and Mohn (2010), supports this view. According to them, Christian organisations can help to maintain and protect important societal values such as religious, cultural, and other social identities. Christian organisations may also help migrants to gain access to the labour market by acting as a good platform for contact creation and the building of relationships (Predelli, 2008).

Building on the literature and current knowledge gap described above, the present study investigates the role of Christian organisations in influencing and promoting the social integration of African immigrants in Trondheim, Norway. The study is focused on two Christian churches in Trondheim namely, Betel Pentecostal Church and Victorious Faith Ministry International.

## **1.1 Objective of the study**

The study seeks to check if the above Christian organisations play any role in promoting social integration of African immigrants in Trondheim. To address the main theme of the study, the following research questions will be answered.

- 1) How do the two churches work with immigrants from African backgrounds?
- 2) What do the immigrants who engage with the churches perceive as the most important factors for their social integration in Trondheim?
- 3) How do the two churches through their activities influence the social integration of Christian immigrants of African background in Trondheim?

## **1.2 Thesis Outline**

The study is split up into six chapters. It begins with an introduction chapter where the objective of the study and research questions are outlined. This is followed with a brief presentation of the Christian churches and their establishments in Norway as well as the Christian organisations and African immigrants in Trondheim.

In chapter two, the conceptual approach of the study is discussed. The chapter focuses on the relationship between the building of social capital and social integration.

Chapter three describes the research methodology. Here, the methodological approach, sample techniques, data collection methods, research positionality, validity and ethical considerations are examined.

In chapter four, the various activities and programs organised by the two churches are examined. The chapter is aimed at providing answers to the first research question. A general description of how the churches, through their various activities work with Christian immigrants of African background as well as other members are outlined.

Chapter five continues with the presentation of findings and attempts to provide answers to the second and third research questions. Here the activities of the churches, their associations and possible links to integration is analysed.

Chapter six starts with a summary of research findings, followed by the conclusion and suggested recommendation.

### **1.3 Christian churches and immigrants in Norway**

In Norway, the constitution obliges all individuals to enjoy right to free practice of their religion (Botvar, 2015). All religion is supported by the constitution on an equal basis. Within the Norwegian society in general, about 71.0 percent of the population belongs to an evangelical Lutheran church (The Church of Norway), a denomination of Protestant Christians (Plesner, 2001). This is the largest Christian establishment in the country. The Catholic church is the second largest made up of 2.9 percent of the total Norwegian population (Botvar, 2015).

The Pentecostal congregations have about 39,000 registered members making up 0.76 percent of the total Norwegian population (Andreassen, 2013). Nevertheless, there are unaffiliated religious groups that make up to about 30,000 registered members (Vik et al., 2016). It is estimated that about 60 percent of immigrants come from a Christian background (Schmidt and Society, 2011).

The Christian Council of Norway Network is known to have a coordinating service function for network participants, where the network act as a resource for churches that work with multicultural communities and function as meeting places for leaders in migrant congregations. Other Christian organizations such as the Kristent Interkulturelt Arbeid equally works under the auspices of the Christian Council of Norway (CCN) with a similar mission aimed at promoting and strengthening amongst others the social integration of immigrants. Little is however, known of the role of individual Pentecostal churches in immigrants' integration.

In Norway, most studies have focused on the role of the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV), Local councils, The Norwegian Red Cross (NRD) and the International Student Union (ISU). One exception is Synnes (2012), who examines the influence of mosques in the integration of Muslim communities in Norway. According to her studies, much focus has been placed on the Muslim faith with little attention given to Christian organisations. The few studies that have addressed Christian organisations have focused on women's participation in religious institutions (Synnes, 2012). With the increasing number of Christian immigrants and the growth of the Christian churches in Norway (Eriksen, 2013), it is thus important to know if these Christian organisations play any role in the integration of new members into the Norwegian society.

#### **1.4 Christian Organisations and African Immigrants in Trondheim City**

Trondheim is located on the southern shore of the Trondheim Fjord, and is ranked the third largest city in Norway with a population of about 198,219 as of 2019 (Andersson et al., 2010). It can be considered a cosmopolitan city because of the presence of many nationalities, diverse cultures from different ethnic groups. Also, the presence of the main research Centre SINTEF and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology attracts students from all over the globe who come to seek for education, including African students some of whom may later want to stay in Norway (Gohari et al., 2020, Corsaro et al., 2013). African migrants are amongst the highest number of religious immigrants' group in Trondheim (Corsaro et al., 2013).

Trondheim is known for its significant history of religion. It has the oldest church called the Nidaros Cathedral and 21 Lutheran churches (Mikaelsson, 2019). Several of the churches are more than one hundred years old and the Cathedral is over one thousand years (Nilsen, 2010). The Cathedral serves as a touristic site which attract tourists and pilgrims from all over with immigrants also visiting the site when they come into the city (Mikaelsson, 2019). Many Pentecostal churches are also operating in Trondheim. Both immigrants and local population attend these churches. There appear to be more immigrants of African backgrounds in many Pentecostal churches than in the Lutheran churches (Liebmann, 2017).

The study however does not seek to find out which of the churches that has more immigrants of African background but rather to investigate if the Betel Pentecostal (BPC) and Victorious Faith Ministry International (VFMI) churches in Trondheim has played any role in promoting the social integration of immigrants of African background into the Norwegian society.

#### **1.5 Betel Pentecostal Church and Victorious Faith Ministry International**

Betel Pentecostal church is the oldest Pentecostal church in Trondheim, created since 1920. It is located at the centre of the city and easily accessible. It has a population of about 1001 members (Arnesen and Lægran, 2003). According to the pastor, the church accommodates quite a large population of immigrants from about thirty African nations. The church has a multicultural profile with members from various African nationalities which include Congo, Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda, South Africa, Liberia, Cameroon, and Togo amongst others. The church has a significant population of Norwegians as well as members of other nations of the world. Bethel operates two worship services every Sunday. The first is the Norwegian service

which begins at 11 am and ends at 1pm while the second is the English service which starts at 2pm and close at 4pm. Many other activities and programs are organised on weekdays. The activities include bible studies, home cell groups, youth meetings, inner city outreach, music café, and mission trips. A family service is also organised every month.

Victorious Faith Ministry International (VFMI) on the other hand has existed for 13 years. It is an organisation with a board of trustees and is officially registered in Norway. The church leadership is made of the pastor, youth, and women leaders who all hail from an African background. They have 85 members from various backgrounds including Cameroon, Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Venezuela, Ghana, Uganda, Kenya, and Norway (Victorious Faith Ministry International, 2017).

Victorious Faith Ministry International church exhibits a typical Pentecostal style of worship. According to the pastor, the church being a Pentecostal denomination, has as purpose to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom by reaching out to those in need and building the church on the “body of Christ”. VFMI organises many activities throughout the year that aims to promote social integration within the church and outside the larger Norwegian society. These activities include bible studies and prayers, youth meetings, cultural diversity celebration, women conventions, and other social gatherings.

The present study has examined the activities and programs describe above, and assessed, if they in one way or the other play any role in promoting social integration of immigrants of African background in Trondheim. Although differences maybe noted in some cases, the study did not mean to carry out a comparative analysis between the two churches but rather to present findings illustrated by the two cases.

In the next chapter of this thesis, I will explain the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of the study, and how social integration is operationalised.

## **Chapter 2: Theoretical/Conceptual Framework**

Theories and concepts usually constitute an integral part of a research process. Therefore, whenever someone embarks on an investigation, the researcher can either be assessing the validity of a theory or is trying to fabricate one (Silverman, 2015). This chapter explains and contextualises the concept of social integration and how it is interpreted and used in this study. Other academic works on related topics have been reviewed and focus has been given to examples where churches and cultural variations are demonstrated regarding social integration.

### **2.1 Understanding Integration and Immigration**

Immigrants are persons who usually come to live permanently in a foreign country (Sharpe, 1995). Different societies or nations have varying requirements for acceptance of newcomers. The immigrant is expected to learn the new language and understand his or her rights as a member of the host society. It is also expected that the immigrants will become productive in the mainstream society (Li and internationale, 2003). Integration involves a long-lasting process where migrants become accepted into a new country or society either as individuals or as a group and participate in the social, economic, political, cultural and religious activities of the country (Castles et al., 2013).

Heckman (2005), views integration as a generational and lasting process of acceptance and inclusion of immigrants into the core institutions, positions, and status of the host society. He places an emphasis on the interactive mechanism between immigrants and the host society. For immigrants, integration is a process of learning a new culture, getting rights and obligations, and accessing social positions. It equally involves the building of personal relationships with members of the host society. This process ignites the feelings of belonging and recognition within the receiving society. For the host society on the other hand, integration refers to welcoming and adapting to immigrants' needs and providing equal opportunities for them (Heckmann, 2005, Polzer, 2007).

While integration is a two-way process, desirable integration is often rooted from an immigration debate which places responsibility on the immigrant to accept the standards and become similar to natives of the resident population (Li and internationale, 2003). The process of integration therefore tends to be defined by the receiving society or country and it is largely reflected in her immigration policy (Jentsch, 2007).



## 2.2 Social Integration

In sociology, the concept of social integration refers to a situation where minority groups come together or are incorporated into a new environment (Brissette et al., 2000). The society usually sets a general norm where people are likely to exhibit a similar pattern of public behaviour. Social integration as well as economic and cultural integrations are the main dimensions of newcomers' experience in the society receiving them.

In his theory of social integration, Emile Durkheim, one of the founders of modern sociology believed that, society exerted a powerful force on individuals where people's standards and values make up a collective consciousness or a shared way of understanding and behaving in the world (Durkheim, 2010). The collective consciousness binds individuals together and supports a social integration which helps immigrants to integrate in a new country. Durkheim's opinion is that, social integration occurs in different steps or solidarities: namely *mechanical solidarity* and *organic solidarity*. Mechanical solidarity binds smaller groups or societies together. Here social ties are based on common feelings and a shared moral standard that are strong among members of preindustrial cultures. Organic solidarity on the other hand comes from the interdependence that arises from specialization of work and the complementarities between people. This kind of integrations, Durkheim argues, is common in modern and industrial societies (Durkheim, 2010).

Solidarity is a key element of every society and an important bond that binds it together (Kivisto, 2014). Religious organisations have a long history as agents of solidarity (Adogame, 2013). The church often carries a message of solidarity in their gospel. Through the gospel, they act as agents of community solidarity (Osa, 1996). This is some of the background for the discussion on how churches play a vital role in helping newcomers in the society to adapt to the life in the host country (McLellan et al., 2005). Religious organisations however, can sometimes act as agents of non-solidarity and disintegration where they may assert that separation of races is a central tenet of faith (Bagni, 1979, Adogame, 2013).

Social integration refers to the structure of the relationship between individuals or groups, where the concept is seen as a productive tool that makes it possible to achieve certain ends (LLAVE and creation, 2010). Trust and trustworthiness amongst members who integrate in a common environment is more intimate than individuals or groups that lack these aspects of trustworthiness and trust for one another (Bourdieu et al., 2019). Social integration might therefore result in intensified collaboration amongst individuals as they connect with each other in a group and institutions in a society or country.

Individuals enjoy a certain degree of strength in connections and social networks which can be a movable resource someone can take along in building a new relationship when they find themselves in a new environment (Rubin, 2012). Social integration indicates a social tie between groups and more steady standards and practices. For Rubin (2012), bringing together people of different ethnic groups regardless of their creed, race, religion, language etc without losing one's identity as such gives access to all areas of community life and eradicates isolation. As a result, social networks are concerned with the demand to move towards a safe and balanced community.

According to Blau (1960), Social integration prevails in a group if bonds of attraction unite its members. Persons interested in becoming integrated members of a group, community or society are under pressure to impress the other members of the society (Amelina and Faist, 2008). However, the resulting competition for popularity may sometime give rise to defensive forces that block social integration (Jackson et al., 2016). Acceptance may also depend on approachability as well as attractiveness, where persons interested to be integrated try to make and build relations. Thus, social integration occurs when bonds connect members of a social group to one another and to the group in general (Blau, 1960, Silk et al., 2009).

In a wider view, social integration focuses on the extent to which immigrants adapt to local customs, social relations and daily practices which is usually measured through social networks and language (Rubin et al., 2012). Social networks are important tools of social integration (Strang and Ager, 2010). It refers to the connections that immigrants build with others in the host country as they largely agree on a collective system of language and culture amongst others. These does not however mean that there are no differences but rather that people choose to live together (Rubin et al., 2012).

Social integration is therefore a broad term that covers not just social and political bridges that may occur in a host country but also cultural and economic bridges. The cultural bridge focuses on the mutual understanding and respect in the exchanges and communication between different cultures. The cultural bridges constantly improve in their own cultural systems and achieve growth (Zhou, 2019). The economic bridge pays specific attention on the host labour market. It measures the possible economic benefit the immigrant can reap from the host economy as well the specific benefits the economy derives from social integration (Zhou, 2019).

The concept of social integration in this thesis will cover the social, economic, cultural, religious, and political exchanges faced by immigrants of African background in Trondheim. It will also be used to examine what role BPC and VFMI churches have played in promoting these exchanges and to analyse whether such exchanges have actually helped the immigrants to integrate in Trondheim.

### **2.3 Social Capital**

Social integration can be viewed as a product of social capital (Durkheim, 2010). Social capital is a concept that describes the extent and nature of relationships people have with others and with their communities. It largely refers to the relationship between people and various services, institutions, and systems (Putnam, 2000). Social capital as a concept can be used to understand the linkages between communities or organisations (Stone, 2003). It is a network of social relations characterised by norms of trust and reciprocity (Cook, 2005). Social relationships affect the ability of people to come together to collectively find solutions to problems they face in common and achieve outcomes of mutual benefits (Stone, 2003). It can therefore be taken as a resource for joint action which may lead to a broad range of outcomes (Lin, 2017).

The concept of social capital also offers a unique insight to social integration. Durkheim's social network analysis on social integration examines the solidarity within persons and groups who come together or relate with one another by sharing common norms, values and identities built on trust (Durkheim, 2010). Social capital is a feature of social organisation such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitates coordination and cooperation for mutual benefits (Putnam, 2000). Trust and norms of mutual benefits are central to integration (Stone, 2003). Social capital is therefore a helpful structure to quantify social integration given its complicated conceptualization (Cook, 2005).

According to Bourdieu (1986), social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources a person has that is linked to their possession of durable networks of institutionalised relationships of mutual knowledge or recognition. He argues that, social capital might result in intensified collaboration amongst individuals as they connect with each other in a group and institutions in a society or country. Bourdieu sees social capital as one of several forms of capital such as economic, cultural as well as spiritual capital. The focus of social capital is usually placed on access to resources (Furseth and Society, 2008).

The concept of social capital extends to include not only social networks and trust worthiness, but other related norms of mutuality (Putnam, 2000, Szreter and Woolcock, 2004). Social capital are features of social organisations that can improve efficiency of a society by facilitating coordination actions (Coleman, 1990). It can be transferable by relationships individuals have with one another as they generate trust in face to face set ups (Herrerros, 2004). When people know each other, trust can be built between them and this trust gradually develops into a more generalised social trust that have profound effects on large scale modern societies (Furseth and Society, 2008).

Social capital are resources that actors can use to realise their interest. For social capital to flow, relationships amongst persons have to be changed in other to facilitate action (Coleman and society, 1994). Such group relationships based on trust will enable the group to achieve more than a group lacking the aspect of trust. For Coleman, connectivity amongst people and groups is the single most important relevant element of growth and productivity.

Social capital may be different from other forms of capital which permanently exist in the structure of relations (MacDonald and Stokes, 2006). In group relationships, success is seen as a product of trust and it will be more evident in a group whose members manifest trustworthiness by placing extensive trust in one another. Social capital is therefore seen as an asset of moral resource that result in increased cooperation among individuals or groups. It is tied in voluntary associations as such groups turn to produce commitment as well as built more trust.

The essence of social capital should not be seen as just a social structure but also as a network of relationships that connect individuals and institutions in a society (Furseth and Society, 2008, Lin, 2017). As a result, it is a vital element in society with the capability to build together independent individuals into mutual relationship. It is however, determined by the extent to which persons get easily incorporated into their family, religious organisations, and political spheres (MacDonald and Stokes, 2006).

The importance of social capital as a vital element of social integration cannot be underestimated. As earlier mentioned, social capital produces features of social organisations such as friendship networks, trust, norms, and resources, that enable people to work together and cooperate for a common good. It can be transferable into a more generalised trust (Furseth and Society, 2008). According to Lin (2017), the context of social capital emphasises socialisation and can sometimes be interpreted into civic participation where

people are concerned with attaining shared advantages in the society. Social capital therefore makes way for accurate expectations regarding the behaviour of others (Putnam, 2000).

Szreter and Woolcock (2004), on their part, classifies social capital in three different forms namely, bonding, bridging, and linking social capitals. Bonding social capital refers to trust and cooperative relations between members of a network who see themselves as being similar in terms of their shared social identity. Bridging social capital by contrast, comprises of relations of respect and mutuality between people who know that they are not alike in socially identity sense while linking social capital is defined as the norms of respect and networks of trusting relationships between people who are interacting across clear, formal, or institutionalised power or authority gradients in the society. Their opinion is that, building links with people from different networks can also provide access to opportunities and links to institutions that can help people gain access to many resources.

In accordance with the views and arguments presented above, one can say Christian churches may have an important role in building social capital by virtue of the relationships that are built in general church settings. Analysing the African Diaspora in Europe, Adogame, states that, religion serves as a source of social, cultural, and spiritual capital amongst African immigrants (Adogame, 2013). His argument is that, the church as a voluntary association, provides social obligations, expectations, and other social supports elements, which is largely understood as social capital. Religious organisations are thus mediums where social capital can be generated and used to connect individuals and societies because of their bridging and bonding behaviours (Greeley, 1997).

Social capital however, can have positive and as well as negative consequences ('Yotti' Kingsley et al., 2006, Adogame, 2013). The exclusion of outsiders, excessive claims on group members, restriction on individual freedom and the downward levelling norms are some examples of negative consequences of social capital (Portes, 1998, Quibria, 2003) . Community norms may also be tied to religious beliefs and symbols and bonding social network can reinforce and deepen ethnic and class distinctions (Adogame, 2013, Briggs, 2004).

Social integration explored through the concept of social capital will form the main conceptual framework in this research. Here, the study will seek to know if the participation of immigrants of African background in various church activities and programs foster their interaction with other people and help in the generation of trust and the building of social

capital. It is thought that when people interact within a group, they can easily get access to ideas, information, money, and other resources. The study will also seek to know how much access the immigrants have on these resources which constitute vital elements in building social capital and to understand whether the social capital has a profound effect on the social integration of the immigrants in Trondheim.

### **Chapter 3. Research Methodology**

The chapter outlines the methodological approach used in this study. Techniques of data collection and analysis is also presented. Important issues relating to trustworthiness, positional spaces, ethics, and fieldwork challenges are explained.

#### **3.1 Methodological Approach**

In research, methods are procedures and techniques used for gathering and analysing data collected. Research methodology sets out systematically, how the researcher intends to solve the research problem underlining the study (Silverman, 2015). The present study employs a qualitative approach since the objective of the study is to explore how Christian organisations help to promote social integration of African immigrants in Trondheim and focuses on the perceptions of organizers as well as church members.

The choice of a qualitative approach in this study is to fully understand the express views of the immigrants demonstrated through their participation, words, feelings, and emotions as concern their social integration in Trondheim (See Appendix 2). 50 people were interviewed including pastors and other church leaders. The respondents were aged from 20 years and above and constituted both male and female Christian immigrants of African background fellowshiping in VFMI and BPC churches in Trondheim. 23 of the respondents were female while 27 were males. The techniques of data collection were semi structured interviews, observation and focus group discussions.

The advantage of the methodology in this study is to enable me to discover the complications of everyday life that immigrants of African background face in the process of social integration in Trondheim.

#### **3.2 Sampling and Selection**

Sampling is the procedure and principles that are employed to identify, choose, and gain access to appropriate data sources from which data is produced using selected methods. Based on many complexities in qualitative research, it is important to employ the right sampling techniques. This is to guide the research on a practical path and to help maintain a scientific focus (Mason, 2010).

As the goal was not to generalize, but to gain a deeper understanding of the perceptions of the informants, the research made use of non-probability sampling in order to prevent the risk of generalising facts. The respondents in the study were selected based on certain criteria that answers the objective of the study and the research questions. The advantage here is that, the method enables the researcher to select categories or groups of people on the basis of their relevance to her/his research questions, theoretical positions and analytical structure (Mason, 2010).

The study employed a purposive random sampling technique to select interviewees to help in obtaining illustrative sample based on their background, age, occupation, gender, and experience. A total of 44 general respondents who were Christian immigrants of African background and 6 key informants made of pastors and other church leaders were interviewed from the two Christian churches.

### **3.3 Socio-Demographic Data of the Respondents**

According to the survey, immigrants from many different African backgrounds are represented in both Bethel Pentecostal Church (BPC) and Victorious Faith Ministry International (VFMI). Immigrants from Ghana (26%) and Nigeria (20%) backgrounds make up the highest number with Sierra Leone (16%), Liberia (14%), and Congolese (10%) backgrounds also constituting a high representation.

The pastor and head of the International Service at Betel, associates the high representation of Christians from Ghanaian and Nigerian backgrounds to the history of creation of the International Service at BPC which saw Ghanaians and Nigerians students from NTNU playing a key role. These he further states, constitute one of the main reasons why many of these immigrants are still students or former students from NTNU. For the Pastor of VFMI, immigrants from Sierra Leon, Liberia and Congo had been amongst the few from African countries that were privileged to be granted refugee status in Norway. Reason he believes is why most of them had former refugee status. This factor is largely supported by the respondents from these 3 backgrounds (Sierra Leone Liberia and Congo) who acknowledge being former refugees or children born to refugee parents.

Christian immigrants from African background constitutes an active population of the church as most of them fall within the working age group. Most of the Christian immigrants fall within the age group of 20 to 47 years constituting a percentage total of 84%.



**Table 1: Background and Age Group of the Respondents**

<b>Respondents African Background</b>	<b>Number of Respondents (BPC and VFMI)</b>	<b>Percentage of Respondents (BPC and VFMI)</b>
Ghana	13	26%
Nigeria	10	20%
Sierra Leone	8	16%
Liberia	7	14%
Congo	5	10%
Uganda	3	6%
Cameroon	3	6%
Kenya	2	4%
Total	N=50	100%
<b>Age group of Respondents (Years)</b>	<b>Number of Respondents (BPC and VFMI)</b>	<b>Percentage of Respondents (BPC and VFMI)</b>
20-26	9	18%
27-33	11	22%
34-40	14	28%
41-47	8	16%
48-54	5	10%
55 and above	3	6%
Total	N=50	100%

Source: *Primary data 2020*

Of this number, those between the age group of 27 to 33 (22%) and 34 to 40 (28%) years make up the largest percentage. Many respondents associated the age disparity to an important characteristic of migration which they say it tend to favour an active adult population rather than infants and the elderly.

Many of the Christian immigrants have had some form of formal education or training. 50% of the immigrants fall in the category of those who have undergone a professional training course. 20% have completed secondary education and 15% have passed through university education. The study found that, out of the 44% of the respondents that have undergone a professional course, many of them belong to the category of Christian immigrants that came in as refugees seeking for political asylum.

**Table 2: Educational Qualification and Marital Status of the Respondents**

<b>Educational Qualification of Respondents</b>	<b>Number of Respondents (BPC and VFMI)</b>	<b>Percentage of Respondents (BPC and VFMI)</b>
Primary Education	3	6%
Secondary Education	10	20%
Professional Training	22	44%
University Education	15	30%
Total	N=50	100%
<b>Matrimonial status</b>	<b>Number of respondents (BPC and VFMI)</b>	<b>Percentage Respondents (BPC and VFMI)</b>
Single (Never Married)	15	30%
Married to African immigrant	14	28%
Married to other nationalities	10	20%
Divorced	7	14%
Widow/Widower	4	8%
Total	N=50	100%

Source: *Primary data 2020*

A larger proportion of those that hold a university education, are immigrants and their spouses who initially came into Norway as master's degree students. Of the 20% that have secondary education, most of them are children who have completed their secondary education and where born in Norway.

Matrimony is an important institution binding the relationship of the immigrants. A total of 48% of the migrants are married with 28% married to fellow immigrants of African background while 20% are married to people of other nationalities.

14% of the immigrants are divorced with many of them stating that because of their desperation to settle in Norway, they had hurriedly married those they did not take time to understand and so the marriage could not last. 30% of the immigrants are not married and most of them are between the age of 20 and 26, and still undergoing some form of education or training.

Respondents were selected based on their duration, participation, and experience as immigrants of African background in Trondheim. The role the church has played in the process of generating social capital and promoting the social integration of immigrants of African background in Trondheim was sought.

### **3.4 Data Sources**

The research for the thesis sought information from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data is that which is collected from a first-hand source. It constituted an important source of data in this study considering that not much data exists about this topic, especially in Trondheim. Primary data in this study was obtained by semi structured interviews, observation and focus group discussions.

Secondary data was collected through reading and analysing already available data in the form of published and unpublished works, books, journals, and government reports etc. Secondary data collection process begins with the inception of a study problem and continues till the end of the research (Silverman, 2015). Government reports on social integration policies in Norway and other countries were useful for the study. The NTNU library and the Online VPN connection provided access to most textbooks, reports, journals, articles, and other thesis work related to the research topic.

#### **3.4.1 Semi-Structured Interviews**

The method was used to collect information from 44 members of Betel Pentecostal and Victorious Faith churches in Trondheim who are immigrants from an African background and were willing to participate in the interviews. In addition to the African immigrants, 2 pastors and 4 church leaders who are proxies of their organisations and by virtue of their positions in the church was considered to know a great deal about the research subject were also interviewed.

Semi-structured interviews were used to seek for information that focused on the participants background, feelings, education, experiences, employment, income, socio-economic status, and connections etc. One advantage of semi-structured interviews in this study is that it was simple and practical to use. The technique also enabled me to get information about things that cannot be easily observed such as perceptions, emotions, and feelings. With this

technique, the interviewee had the confidence to reveal or discuss sensitive issues and the researcher is set to understand the participant point of view rather making generalization. People are able to talk about something in detail and can allow the researcher to understand certain relevant issues she or he had no preceding knowledge consuming.

### **3.4.2 Observation**

Observation in qualitative research is a way of gathering data by watching behaviours, events or noting physical characteristics in their natural setting or environment. This method of inquiry is an action choice for the researcher. Here she watches the events that are happening around the research subjects and how they engage (Hay, 2010, Miles and Huberman, 1994). The aim of observation is to help the researcher to gain more insight into what people do and how they interact, also the more taken for granted and the less reflected upon behaviours. The method is focused on people's feelings such as joy, anger, sadness and grief (Hay, 2010). I was observant during the interviews and interactions with my respondents, noting and recording any observation especially when sensitive questions were posed. For example, most respondents were shy to answer questions that challenged the management of the church.

I attended two Sunday services for both churches to observe how the activities were carried out. I equally attended two social service programs organised by both churches. My focus was on the social interaction of the immigrants with residents and on how information was disseminated. My intension was to note if the interactions was building trust between people. I also wanted to observe if this interaction could be a building avenue for social capital and a factor that could promote the social integration of immigrant of African background in Trondheim. Here I noticed that the Christian immigrants and the resident's interaction was free and open. The advantage of this technique is that unlike the other techniques used in this study, observation took a shorter time and it was more focused. Though given this advantage, I remained focused on the observation and avoided being submerged in the entire framework.

### **3.4.3 Focus Group Discussion**

I held two focus group discussions with one group in Betel church and another group in VFMI. The number of participants for each group were 6 in number. There were 3 males and 3 females in both focus groups. The participants were selected by purposive sampling. These were all leaders of different groups in both churches.

During the discussions, I made sure I kept the group in the research topic but tried as much as possible to be non-directive. To ensure a successful contribution from each member I made sure one or some individuals did not dominate the group discussion. I encouraged reluctant members and gave them opportunity to raise their own point of view to enable me gather relevant information to answer my research questions. I also made sure that there were equal chances for gender participation.

The interactive action within the focus group presented an opportunity for participants to explore different points of view on the same topic. This provided me the opportunity to obtain much as well as diverse information in one sitting that could not be obtained with the other data collection techniques. The difficulty I encountered with this technique is that it was challenging for me to put everyone on track with the research topic as some participants were not comfortable to be interrupted even if their point is out of the research topic or they were using too much time to make their point.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

In this stage the main process is for the researcher to organise the bulk of information that she has gathered in order to make sense of it (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Observations and field notes obtained during interviews were transcribed and analysed. During this study, I employed the attitude of home assignment habit as part of my exercise where I made sure to regularly reflect and develop what I recorded and noted every day I go out for my area of study. Hay (2016), cautions of the danger of piling unprocessed data arguing that, because researchers usually get tired during field work, they may easily forget to record reflections from the field.

The process of data analysis is oriented around participation (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013). It is aimed to make sense out of people opinions and perceptions by looking for models and putting together differences. Data analysis involves the various techniques faced in transferring information recorded during field work for example field notes, into partially

processed data such as write ups which are later coded and analysed with the aim of answering research questions. Data analysis also involves coding of variables such as sex, feeling, marital status, age, employment status and level of education of participants amongst others (Silverman, 2015).

The data analysis for this study was based on an interpretive approach that relied on the themes discussed. Here I used Key-Words-In-Context (KWIC) technique by simply reading through my text and noting words and synonyms that my respondents use a lot. The words were coded thematically and used to identify texts that were linked by a common theme or idea. By thematic coding it was possible for me to arrange my data into proficient segments and make it understandable for any reader.

### **3.6 Validity of Data**

The essence for any research work is to demonstrate how trustworthy the findings are which is not different with the research project. According to Bazeley and Jackson (2013), validity is concerned with the soundness, authenticity and the importance of a research theory and its study. Validity means to check whether the research truly measures that which it was aimed to measure. Researchers are recommended to incorporate checking into their study process by going back and forth into the research questions in order to achieve a trustworthy result (Twinn, 1997).

In the interviews, I asked critical questions and follow-up questions in attempt to double check the responses from my respondents to make sure that the information I got from them was exactly what they meant. This helped me to make corrections or update some missing information. I also personally interviewed my respondents so as to properly understand their viewpoints and in a situation that the respondents did not understand a question clearly, I rephrased it to ensure proper understanding.

Validity can sometimes be a difficult factor to measure in qualitative research where emotions, beliefs and moods of the respondents continue to affect their responses (Kome, 2012). Nevertheless, I will say that the information I got from my respondents is trustworthy and that is what I used to draw the conclusion for this study.

### **3.7 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical issues were prioritized throughout the study. Power relation involves in research has been cautioned in qualitative research and the credibility of any research depends on the researcher's ability to critically question every move in the research process (Crang and Cook, 2007). Researchers are also advised to avoid intruding into respondent's privacy. Research ethics questions the behaviour of researchers and their responsibility and commitments to the various actors involved in the research (Twinn, 1997).

To make sure I was working in line with prescribed ethics. I wrote a consent letter (see Appendix A) which was served on all my respondents. I had to explain the content of the letter to the respondents who did not understand it. I made sure to constantly introduce myself and to explain the purpose of the research to my respondents before interviews began. Even though access was granted in both churches, the consent of every respondents was always sought, the purpose of the survey with the methods of accomplishment were made clear. I gave my respondents the assurance that their information and privacy will be kept anonymous and confidential.

I also explained to my respondents why I had to take down notes. I assured them that this was done so that I do not forget or get mixed up. Furthermore, I reminded my respondents of their right to refuse to answer certain questions they may deem so and their right to withdraw at any point of the interview. A few respondents refused to answer questions they thought was sensitive or issues they considered to be their private opinion. I respected their decision to do so while I still politely continued with the interviews with other questions. Researchers are also cautioned of the danger to intrude in people's privacy or identity (Kvale, 1996). I therefore tried my best to concentrate on just the knowledge that was needed and to respect the dignity and rights of the respondents throughout the study.

### **3.8 Personality and Positionality**

The position of the researcher in the process is known to affect the information collected and the results (Cousin and uncertainty, 2010). Thus, it is relevant for the researcher to reflect on her position throughout the study. Since I came to Norway from Cameroon, I have mostly lived in Trondheim and I have some good knowledge about of the city. Though I am not a member of any of the above churches on study, I have attended some programmes and activities organised by these churches such as ordination of pastors, child dedications, bible

conferences and thanksgiving services etc. The observations from this participation I must say was a motivational factor for my study.

Through these activities, I have become a bit familiar with some of the members and leaders of both churches. This familiarity has helped us to interact when we meet even out of the church setting. This, I can claim, gives me some degree of “insider” status in these two churches. The advantage here is that, I was able to use my knowledge of the group to gain insights into their opinions. This I can also say made the respondents to trust me to some extent since I was considered one of them especially as we share same faith and always respond to the invitations of both churches.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that although I hold a bachelor degree with some research experience, and familiar with some of the respondents in BPC and VFMI, my level of education and familiarity did not provide me with the primary knowledge I needed to make conclusions for this study. The information I used for the conclusion of this study came purely from the respondents I interviewed.

### **3.9 Challenges Encountered during Studies**

From the onset of the research, I had difficulties to find potential respondents for my study. First, I thought coming from an African background and my positionality with both churches would ease researching within these churches filled with immigrants from African background. However, it turn out that I had to convince most of the African immigrants to be my respondents by explaining to them that, the purpose of seeking their information was mainly for an academic study and that their information will be kept confidential and discarded after the study.

Data collection also coincided with the outbreak of the Corona Virus pandemic. It was a terrible time where the whole country of Norway was largely short down for about two months. A moment where all schools, offices and people were advised to stay in their houses for health concerns. Due to the situation, the interview process was suspended for 3 months (March, April, and May) and thus delayed the progress of data collection. Notwithstanding, I was able to come back at the beginning of the month of June and conduct the interviews when the lock down restrictions was uplifted. This situation meant that I did not have the opportunity to do more observations as I would have wanted. The situation caused me to



apply for an extension of the submission date of my thesis from the month of June 2020 to August 2020.

In addition, I faced challenges in rescheduling appropriate time for interviews with my respondents. Respondents often cancelled the appointment dates and time for the interview at short notice because they were very busy after the upliftment of the country's lock down restrictions. Sometimes respondents complained of lack of time, while others did not remember the appointment date. However, I managed to get a satisfying number of interviews by following up my informants. I had also managed to do some of my observations before fieldwork, and although I had initially planned for more, this helped in the analysis of the research.

## **Chapter 4. Programmes and Activities in BPC and VFMI Churches**

This chapter starts with the presentation of findings of the study. It responds to the first research question put forward by this study on how the two churches work with immigrants from African backgrounds. The chapter outlines a brief history of both VFMI and Betel Pentecostal churches. It then explains the various programs and activities to provide a general picture of how the church through the various programs and activities work with Christian immigrants of African background as well as with other members of the church.

### **4.1 Brief History of Betel Pentecostal Church (BPC)**

Betel Pentecostal Church in Trondheim is a Pentecostal denomination. BPC has as vision to reach as many people as possible by preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. The goal is to transform her followers and enable them focus on Gods purpose for their lives. The motto of the church is “All nations, generations, one family”. The members of the church are composed of mainly “stable” families with their children. BPC daily activities is led by a board of eight elected leaders which includes both Norwegians and Africans.

As previously mentioned, the church was founded in 1920 by seventeen Norwegians from different families. In an interview with the pastor and head of the International Service at Betel Church, the fellowship continued with many more Norwegians and people from other nationalities joining the church in the later years although the medium of communication in every sermon or activity remained *Norsk*.

The year 1998, saw the introduction of the International Service with English language as the medium of communication. This change was introduced when people from many African countries including Ghana, Zambia, Uganda, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe joined the church. The Africans were students who had come to study at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in Trondheim. It is said that, the new members at the time complained that they could not follow the activities in the church because of the language barrier since there was no translator in the church. Partly due to the increasing number of people of other nationalities in the church and the need to incorporate them in all church programs, the head of the church agreed with a representative of other nationalities that every sermon should be translated to English so that Christians that do not understand Norwegian should benefit.

The above arrangement continued until 2002 when the board approved a separate international service from the main Norwegian service. Here the sermon and other activities

in the service was to be conducted through English language as the medium of communication. As stated by an elder of the church:

*“I came to BPC in 2001 but I will tell you that, I never felt like I belonged to the church until 2002 when there was the introduction of the International service with English as the main language of communication. The English service of BPC is something I am very proud of to be part of history”.*

BPC today has an international service which has people of up to 30 different backgrounds. The international service runs from 2pm to 4pm every Sunday. Heckmann (2005), has emphasized the importance of bridging the communication gap as a vital role in social integration.

#### **4.2 Programmes and Activities**

The Betel Pentecostal church (BPC) organises programs within the church as well as out of the main church setting. These programs and activities are a way of life to many members. In addition to Sunday service, the church organises other meetings such as Bible Study meetings, Women meetings, Prayer Group meetings, Home Cell Group meetings and Youth Group meetings etc. These different activities are described below.

##### **4.2.1 Sunday Activities**

Every Sunday, church members meet for worship at their permanent building at Prinsen Gate 10B, in Trondheim. Every member of the church is encouraged to be part of the Sunday activity. The activity is the largest gathering of the week and it is attended by Christians from different nationalities including both men and women, young and old, immigrants and residents, students as well as non-students. The Norwegian service normally starts at 11am to 1pm while the English services starts at 2pm to 4pm. The service starts with a word of prayer followed by praise and worship songs led by the choir. The choir is made of members who hail from the different nationalities although immigrants from African countries make up the bulk of the choir especially at the international service. In most cases, the songs are in English but can also in Norwegian. During praise and worship sessions, the songs inspire members to dance, jump and shout portraying the Pentecostal lifestyle of worship. As stated by a respondent:

*“I learned many words in the Norwegian language when I joined the choir at Betel church, and I will tell you that was the beginning of my integration in Trondheim. This helped me to pick up quite easy when I later attended a Norwegian language course offered by the state”.*

BPC members consider themselves to be “Born Again Christians” with “speaking in tongues” a common practice amongst them. After praise and worship, a prayer session is led by the moderator. This is followed by the sharing of testimonies from people who may wish to notify the church of the good things God has done for them. The gospel of the day is preached by either the main pastor or his associates or by both. The preaching usually last for one hour and it is followed by singing led by the choir. The singing is meant to compliment the gospel and to usher in the collection of offerings, tithes, and other forms of seed sewing.

Before the meeting ends, important announcements are made and new members who are worshipping with the church for the first time are requested to introduce themselves to the rest of the church. The members are welcomed by the church and encouraged to remain members of the church. Social integration is facilitated when immigrants are welcomed into a new society or country and encouraged to participate in the social, economic, political, cultural and religious activities of the society or country (Castles et al., 2013). An associate pastor or other elders of the church may be assigned to talk to the new members privately to get to know them even more and try to build bonds. Such bonds are important elements of social integration because they connect members of a social and religious group to one another (Blau, 1960). Although service ends at 4pm, members are called on to move to the kitchen where they are expected to share cakes, coffee and tea while chatting with one another.

#### **4.2.2 Cell Group and Bible Study Meetings**

Cell meetings join members in small groups with the aim to create strong spiritual and social relationships amongst members according to one of the associate pastors. For social capital to flow, there is need for relationships amongst people to be changed (Coleman and society, 1994). Members who live in the same neighbourhood in Trondheim come together. The meetings hold twice a month in the homes of different members, and it is rotational. Members may also decide to hold meetings outside of their homes in parks, restaurants, or other public places. The meeting is also an opportunity for Christians to come together in small units irrespective of their nationalities or backgrounds. Members share the word of God, sing, and pray together. In addition, members share with each other their thoughts,

experience, difficulties and receive counsel. Members may also share some drinks or snacks at the end of the meeting. According to Stone (2003), when people come together to find solution to common problems, there is the likelihood for them to achieve outcomes of individual and mutual benefits.

Two of my respondents however said they were not very comfortable with the idea that cell meetings must be rotational and hosted by every member. *“The fact that it is becoming more like a tradition for members to host others and provide snacks for them is not a good idea”* states one of them. Another respondent questions, the rationale behind receiving social help which she says is more or less tied to the commitment of members to the group. *“I do not agree that, if you have to give help to a fellow Christian it should depend on his/her loyalty to your group”* states another respondent. Some scholars have warned of the negative side of social capital generated in group associations by arguing that, it may sometime infringe on the personal freedom of individuals or lead to the exclusion of others (Adogame, 2013, Briggs, 2004).

Unlike cell group meetings, bible study meetings are large and is meant for every BPC Christian. Members meet one time in a week in the main auditorium of BPC in Trondheim. The meetings are scheduled on every Tuesdays from 5pm to 7pm, to study the word of God. The aim of this meeting is to help group members to have a deeper understanding of the bible. These meetings are usually an opportunity to follow-up on the teachings of the past Sunday sermon. A general prayer is usually offered to everyone, but special prayer is offered to those members who are sick or have other challenges of life. At the end of these meetings, member may sometimes also share some drinks and snacks.

#### **4.2.3 Encounter Weekend Program**

Special weekends programs are organised for members to go out of the church setting to fellowship together. Both Norwegians and foreign nationals and their children attend these meetings. It holds ones in every month. A church leader usually volunteers to select a nice and quiet place out of Trondheim and make all provisions necessary for the program. It begins on a Friday and ends on Sunday. During this gathering, members do a lot of activities such as games, drama, storytelling, riddles, teachings, praying and singing. The various activities are scheduled such that each day has a specific task and at the end of every day’s activity, members eat, drink, and discuss together. Such interactions may easily lead to

building of bonding social capital which is based on trust and reciprocity and constitutes an essential element of social integration (Putnam, 2000).

#### **4.2.4 Other Church Celebrations**

As a Christian church, BPC celebrates Christian holidays such as Christmas and Easter holidays. To the pastor, during these celebrations' members come together to celebrate the birth and resurrection of their saviour Jesus Christ. As Christians, these periods are special as it is considered a time for forgiveness, reconciliation, sharing, peace and above all love towards one another. Usually, during these celebrations, food, drinks, and other gifts are exchanged amongst members.

#### **4.2.5 BPC Connections and Associations with other Organizations**

Betel is part of a local forum of free churches in Trondheim called Kristien Leadership Forum (KLF). They organise joint programmes together a few times in a year. Such programmes include "BønneUke" (week of prayer) for Trondheim and a Global Outreach Day (GOD), an evangelistic outreach programme to reach the community with the gospel. Betel is also, part of the Ecumenical Group Forum in Trondheim where different religious groups interact. In this meeting, member discuss the work, growth, and the various difficulties face by the church and try to come up with possible solutions. Here, the pastor of the church and other leaders invites all church members. Guest speakers from Trondheim *Kommune* and other social services are brought in to educate the members about their social responsibilities in Norway. As stated by the pastor of BPC:

*"I think these programs have particularly been useful to many new immigrants who are parents because here, they are taught of their parental rights and responsibilities in the Norwegian society". Members have always asked me to try and organise more of such programs because so much can be learned within a short space of time".*

Apart from that, Betel often invite other churches like Glory House to participate in their yearly programs such as the Mission Possible Conference. During the conference, the pastors and some board members raise up issues pertaining to mission outreach to exploit on the best possible ways of taking the gospel to other parts of Trondheim. Such fellowship with other church leaders may lead to the building of bridging social capital (Putnam, 2000).

### **4.3 Brief History of Victorious Faith Ministry International (VFMI)**

Compared to BPC, VFMI is a small church. It was created in 2006 in Trondheim. According to the pastor and founder of the church, the idea came while he was undertaking studies in Theology at a bible school in Trondheim. While in this school, he said that he got inspiration from the *Holy Spirit* to start a church. Upon graduation, he therefore went ahead with the registration process. The bible verse, 1 John 5:4 inspired him to name the church Victorious Faith Ministry International.

Working in the same inspiration, the pastor states that, the church has as mission to teach members to discover and fulfil their purpose for living on earth. Presently, the membership of the church stands at 85 people and 70% are immigrants of African background. Sunday meetings are held in a rented building at Brattoveita 10, in Trondheim.

### **4.4 Programmes and Activities**

At VFMI, there are many programs and activities scheduled at different venues and for various purposes. The programs and activities are of diverse interest to members and takes place on different days of the week. Sundays are schedule for the main weekly service while programs such as women meetings, bible studies, prayer meetings and youth meetings etc are scheduled for various weekdays.

#### **4.4.1 Sunday Activities**

The Sunday worship service starts at 3pm. According to one of the deacons, the reason for the late start is because, the building which is a temporal venue is a rented apartment and occupied by others in morning hours of every Sunday. Some church workers go ahead 30 minutes prior to the service to arrange the hall and get everything in proper position. The service starts with an opening prayer session. This is followed by praise songs aimed to exalt God. Next on the program, is a call to worship where a bible verse is read which corresponds to the main teaching of the month. The church hymn book is used for singing though printed copies of the songs are sometimes distributed to especially newcomers who may not have the hymn book with the aim to enable them to participate in the singing.

The songs are also selected from various nationalities with the aim of satisfying different cultural groups as well as promoting multiculturalism and living together in the church. In most cases the songs are in English, but sometimes in Norwegian as well.

After praise and worship, some members with testimonies will be given the opportunity to testify of the good things God has done for them. The pastor is called to deliver the sermon which usually last for about one hour. Preaching is followed by more praise songs while members are equally given the opportunity to pay in their offerings and tithes. The service officially ends at 5pm. However, as a routine, the members stay back after the service to share some coffee, snacks, and drinks. During this moment, members chat with one another as they welcome new members and exchange contacts with the aim to do a follow up on them.

#### **4.4.2 Bible Studies and Prayer Meetings**

The church holds bible study meetings every Wednesdays as from 5pm to 7pm, where members come together to study the word of God. As stated by a respondent:

*“I am a woman of faith and the greatest gift you can offer me is your prayer. I feel very strong anytime Christians join together and pray for me. The prayer meeting is the point of connection for us Christians, here every social boundary is broken”.*

Prayer meetings are scheduled on Thursdays to pray for members who are having challenges in various areas of life and for the general growth of the church. At the end of this meetings, members may eat and drink some tea or coffee as they discuss and get familiar with one another.

#### **4.4.3 Women Meeting**

The women in VFMI usually organise special meetings once in every month. The aim of this meeting is to bring the women together and educate them as they fellowship together. According to the leader of this group, during the meetings, women are taught and encouraged to live a “godly life”. They are equally advised to be good mothers, wives and career women who are financially stable and of positive influence on the society.

The women group also organises workshops, where women learn new skills in cooking, baking and decoration from those who know the skills. Sometimes, health care talks are presented by the wife of the pastor who teach women on how to better take care of themselves. The study found that, the women have put in place different ways to assist their



members to establish job contacts and to help in the search of accommodation whenever need arise. As stated by one of the respondents:

*“When I had difficulty finding accommodation, a Norwegian friend I had met in the church took me into her house for one month until I was able to get my own accommodation. The bond we succeeded to build during that period has since grown and transformed into our bigger family circles. I trust my Norwegian friend so much. She is like a sister to me. We just return from Christmas holiday in Kenya where we were spending Christmas with my family”*

Furseth and Society (2008), share this opinion and state that, trust built between people when they meet, can grow into a more generalised social trust with profound effect.

In VFMI church, some newcomers may be supported financially if they do not find a job early enough or unexpectedly loss their job during their early settling process. As stated by another respondent:

*“For example, as an act of solidarity, the church board has just unanimously agreed that the church should support new members who are in financial need with a sum of 1000NOK every month in this period of Corona virus pandemic where many of us where laid off from our jobs but did not meet the government requirement to benefit from the government social support system (NAV)”.*

This statement was confirmed by the pastor but emphasized that, the applications to get grant are usually carefully considered so that only newcomers who fall within the stated criteria gets the grant. As a means to offer more social assistance and to help new newcomers, some members who are proficient in the Norwegian language sometimes volunteer to offer Norwegian lessons to members who cannot speak the language according to the coordinator of the welfare department of VFMI. Coleman (1990), has stressed the importance of connectivity and productivity amongst people, and argue that such connections makes it possible to achieve certain ends that would have been difficult to achieve in the absence.

The study also found that, members of the women group equally encouraged to show solidarity and assist one another in times of other social needs such during baby showers, child dedication, weddings, birthdays, and baptism. Sometimes the women may contribute money to support widows and orphans in for example conflict hit countries in Africa.

#### **4.4.4 Youth Alive Group**

The youths of VFMI formerly called the Youth Alive Group organises recreational activities every year during summer. According to youth leader, youth members of VFMI meet with youths from other churches and other social groups to participate in the programme. During this gathering, youths show their various talents in games such as football, volleyball, basketball, and several others. The motto of this group is “Youth Alive for a Sustainable Future”. In this group, all youths are accepted and allowed to participate in all the activities, irrespective of their various backgrounds. As stated by the leader of the group:

*“The idea behind the meeting is to get the youths to meet new friends, have fun, encourage one another especially newcomers or those who are school dropouts and who face other challenges in life. Here, there is solidarity and we build social networks as most youths feel motivated to help friends to find jobs and impact lives”.*

Such social networks have been emphasized as important tools of social integration (Rubin et al., 2012, Blau, 1960). These group receives financial support from the Trondheim *Kommune* through the church to run this program every summer. Usually at the end of the program they fellowship together as they drink, eat, and even exchange contacts and make new friends. Participation in voluntary association fosters interaction between people and generates trust, which help participants with attaining shared advantages in the society (Lin, 2017).

#### **4.4.5 VFMI and other Organizations**

VFMI church relates with different Christian networks and organisations. VFMI has close ties with the leadership of Overcomers International Church, Trondheim. The pastors of both churches collaborate and more often than not participate in each other’s programs. VFMI connects with the African Network Resource Centre in Trondheim. The African Network Resource Centre is a cultural network with the aim to break cultural barriers between local and those with foreign backgrounds. The network brings together Christians from various churches as well as Trondheim civil society. During the cultural gathering, everyone is expected to dress in a regalia that portrays their cultural background. Activities include the presentation and sharing of traditional meals, debates, dance, and fashion parades where participants showcase their different cultures. The essence is to bring people with different cultural background together and build social capital. Social integration is viewed as a product of social capital (Durkheim, 2010).

VFMI is also a member of Multicultural Church Network. The aim of this organisation is to create an opportunity for leaders of international churches to meet and discuss issues concerning their growth, difficulties, and pastoral works. The significance of such gathering is that both foreign and local population get a chance to interact and establish new contacts that in most cases turn to lasting relationships.

VFMI has an international affiliation with Derick Prince Ministry International, a mega Pentecostal church with headquarters in the United Kingdom. The pastor of VFMI, describes VFMI as a “stream entering an ocean”. By this, he means that, as a small church VFMI draws a lot of inspiration from an advanced, experienced, and established church where they can learn a lot of spiritual insight. He added that by partnering with Derick Prince Ministry International, the board of the church has agreed to pay 10 percent of VFMI income to the ministry to support their work. On the other hand, VFMI also receive huge support from their partners such as musical instruments, books, and funds to sponsor some leadership courses. These connections are aimed at breaking spiritual barriers between local and international Christians and to encourage cooperative works meant to achieve spiritual goals.

## **Chapter 5. Social Integration of Christian Immigrants of African Background in Trondheim**

This chapter responds to the second and third research questions put forward by the study. The chapter will analyse what the Christian immigrant of African background who engage with the above mentioned churches perceive as the most important factors for their social integration in Trondheim as well as the role the churches have played in influencing these factors with their activities.

Perception is defined as a physical sensation interpreted in the light of experience or a capacity for comprehension (Moser, 2008). Some respondents however perceive social integration in Trondheim as the ability to learn a new culture, understand their rights and to have a feeling of belonging and recognition by Norwegian citizens and other residents in the country. Few of the respondents, saw their social integration in Norway as simply accepting the overall standards set by the country though admitting that their social integration in Norway has been a long-term process that has come with a lot of challenges.

Through initial interviews, the study noted that the respondents, perceive factors such as their Norwegian language proficiency levels, their access to socio-economics opportunities, their employment possibilities, and their freedom of movement and expression as factors that influence their social integration in Trondheim. These factors were included in the questionnaires and the responses of the respondents were measured with a Three and Five-point Likert Scale in order to fully comprehend the perception of their social integration in Trondheim.

**Table 3: Respondents perception of their social integration in Trondheim**

<b>Perception Level</b>	<b>Number respondents (BPC and VFMI)</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents (BPC and VFMI)</b>
Very Good	5	10%
Good	11	22%
Fair	20	40%
Poor	8	16%
Very Poor	6	12%
Total	N=50	100%

Source: Primary data 2020

Notes: Respondents perception of their social integration in Norway was measured on a Five-point Likert scale where 1=very good, 2=good, 3=fair, 4=poor and 5=very poor.

The overall perception of the respondents in both churches, of their social integration in Trondheim is quite high with 72% of them stating that, they feel integrated although a larger fraction of them rates their integration to be “fair” (40%).

## **5.1 Factors Respondents Perceive as most Important in their Social Integration in Trondheim**

### **5.1.1 Norwegian Language Proficiency Levels of the Respondents (Self-assessed)**

The study notes that Norwegian language skills are amongst the most important factors almost all the respondents agree is a vital element that has facilitated or inhibited their social integration into the Norwegian society. Acquiring the language skills has come with various challenges. Many respondents think that, language proficiency acquisition skills depend on the background of the respondents, the ability to finance the course, and their educational level etc. Although the elementary lessons offered in both churches has been helpful, many of the respondents’ say that, it is the Norwegian course certificates from government authorised institutions that is recognised especially in professional jobs and institutions of learning.

**Table 4: Respondents self-assessed Norwegian Language Proficiency levels**

<b>Language Proficiency</b>	<b>Number of Respondents (BPC and VFMI)</b>	<b>Percentage of Respondents (BPC and VFMI)</b>
Very good	5	10%
Good	8	16%
Fair	19	38%
Below Average	14	28%
Poor	4	8%
Total	N=50	100%

Source: *Primary data 2020*

Notes: Respondents self-assessed Norwegian language proficiency level was measured on a Five-point Likert scale where 1=very good, 2=good, 3=fair, 4=below average and 5=poor.

The study found that a total of 64% of the immigrants are proficient in the language. Majority of them rate their proficiency level as “fair” (38%). Almost all the respondents who registered in Norway as refugees are undertaking a Norwegian language course sponsored by the government. This opportunity is not given to those that came to Norway as students. All respondents who came in the country as students and who still maintain their status but interested in taking the language course pay an exorbitant sum of about 4,000Kkr every month as tuition to the Trondheim *Kommune* for the language course. A situation many of them say is not favourable as they cannot afford. The study also found that, the Norwegian University of Science and Technology offer free language courses but with limited space to admit every interested applicant. Probed whether the language barrier is a hinderance to access job opportunities, many respondents admitted that language is a requirement in most skilled jobs but said it did not count much when it comes to unskilled jobs like cleaning and newspaper distribution.

Some respondents think that the language remains the single most important factor for immigrants and is considered to be a barrier in accessing the job market. As stated by one of the respondents:

*“I personally think that the language is more important in this country than an academic qualification. I hold a master’s degree and has attempted many professional job interviews, but the language has been the single factor that has knocked me out in all those job interviews. Your Norwegian language proficiency level will determine whether someone will want to pay attention to you or not”.*

The importance of learning the language of the host country has been emphasized as a key element of social integration (Castles et al., 2013). The argument here is that, the faster an immigrant gets to learn the language of the host country, the more likely it is to access social and economic opportunities (Schuck, 2018).

### **5.1.2 Accessibility to Socio-Economic Opportunities**

Access to socio-economic opportunities has also been established in this study as another factor that the respondents perceive to be vital for their integration in Trondheim. Socio-economic opportunity is defined here as the relative possibility that the respondents get with reference to their access to jobs, loans, medical care, and information amongst others. Social integration is a long lasting process where migrants do not only become accepted in a new

country but equally get access to social, economic, and political opportunities (Castles et al., 2013, Alba and Foner, 2015).

**Table 5: Respondents perceptions of their Access to socio-economic opportunities (Jobs, loans, medical, information etc)**

Level of Access to socio-economic opportunities	Number respondents (BPC and VFMI)	Percentage of respondents (BPC and VFMI)
Very Difficult	5	10%
Difficult	10	20%
Average	17	34%
Easy	13	26%
Very Easy	5	10%
Total	N=50	100%

Source: *Primary data 2020*

Note: Respondents view on their level of access to socio-economic opportunities in Trondheim was measured on a Five-point Likert scale where 1=very difficult, 2=difficult, 3=Average, 4=easy and 5=very easy

Access to social and economic opportunities is quite as 70% of the respondent's rates it to be average and above. A larger segment of this number puts the accessibility to average (34%). However, some of the respondents' caution that, job accessibility also depends on the nature of the job. According to many respondents, it is easy to be employed in mostly unskilled jobs in hotels, restaurants, shops, and other sectors. This factor is not much of a concern to some of them who admits that, given their level of education and Norwegian language proficiency level, finding an unskilled job in the above-mentioned sectors was quite satisfactory "*The fact that most of us are employed is not something to take for granted*", states a respondent. Although in some cases, the study however notes that, the respondents are not fully satisfied with the nature of jobs they do for a living.

Blau (1960), states that, unlike natives and older residents, new immigrants may accept any opportunity that comes their way in the early stage of their social integration. He however emphasized that, this becomes different as the immigrant become more integrated in their host society. While many of the respondents expressed the difficulties they face to get access to bank loans, to others, the criteria to access bank loans as well as other services is fair for

everyone and gives the same opportunity to all people resident in Norway. “*Information and other services are relatively easy to access in Trondheim. Government services are effective especially to those who can read*” states another respondent. Most of the respondents who do not speak Norwegian, are comfortable with the fact that they can communicate with Norwegians and many others through English.

### 5.1.3. Respondents Employment Status

The total employment percentage of the respondents is also quite high (70%), as shown in Table 6 below. A larger number of respondents (52%), are employed in the service and hospitality industry particularly in hotels, restaurants, cleaning, shops, care homes, transportation, and delivery services etc.

**Table 6: Employment Status of the Respondents**

Employment status	Number of Respondents (BPC and VFMI)	Percentage of (Respondents BPC and VFMI)
Student	10	20%
Service, Hospitality, Unskilled (hotels, cleaning, shop, transport, care home etc)	26	52%
Professional jobs (highly skilled jobs)	7	14%
Self Employed (own business)	2	4%
Unemployed (not able to find a job)	4	8%
Total	N=50	100%

Source: *Primary data 2020*

Many of them think that, they are not in their dream jobs but had to keep aside their qualification and past experience to settle for something that can lead to quick production.

Probed on why they could not create their own jobs, most of my respondents said it is difficult to access a huge business loan in Norway due to very complicated bureaucratic procedures. According to one of my respondents, applicants must have stayed in a permanent address in Norway for at least 3years and must have earned a satisfactory amount of money for the past years. This condition, he believes, knocks out many of the Christian immigrants



especially those that have not stayed in the country for a very long time. His argument is that, when immigrants arrive, they are often faced with the challenge of having a fixed accommodation, undertaking a language training and other courses and at the same time struggling to find a job. This view is supported by Alba and Foner (2015), who state that, complex immigration policies in many countries exerts a multiple challenge on migrants and that has adversely affected their social integration in the receiving countries.

The percentage of those employed in highly skilled profession stands at 14% and many of the respondents who fall in this group are those that came to Norway as master's students and secured their jobs upon completing their studies. The study found that, 20% of the respondents are currently studying, with most of them undertaking university education.

#### **5.1.4 Respondents Freedom of Movement and Expression**

Some of respondents think that their freedom of movement and expression in Trondheim and Norway is not a factor to be taken for granted. According to one of the respondents who came from Sudan, freedom of movement and expression was the strongest factor that influenced her decision to immigrate to Norway. As stated by her:

*“I can move freely anywhere in this country and express myself as much as I want. That matters to me more than anything else. I say so because I know where I am coming from and what I have seen and has gone through”.*

To some others, the peace in Norway and the hospitality of Norwegian citizens remains the strongest value the country has and should jealously protect.

Some of the respondents, however, are of the opinion that, they are not yet fully integrated in Trondheim. While others think that, social integration is a long and continuous process which can be difficult to draw a finish line. Heckmann (2005), supports this view and states that, accepting immigrants into the core institutions of their host societies is a lasting process that comes with many challenges.

## **5.2 How do the Two Churches through their Activities Influence the Social Integration of Christian Immigrants of African Background in Trondheim**

The pastor of BPC church recognises and respects the large number and the diversity that Christians immigrants of African background bring to the church. According to him, the

church has undertaken several structural changes to work with these Christians and to accommodate their presence in the church. One of such many changes, he argues, was in 1998 when the management of the church saw the need to create an International Service with English as the language of communication to take care of Christian immigrants of African background. As stated by the pastor:

*“It is a privilege for me as a Christian immigrant of African background to be one of the pastors at BPC and the head of the International Service. Thanks to the management of the church that has always seen the need to be flexible in order to accommodate Christians coming from other backgrounds”.*

Social integration can be facilitated when the host society through various institutions welcome immigrants and adapt to their needs so as to be able to provide opportunities for them (Heckmann, 2005).

The opportunity for Christians to choose whether to fellowship with either the Norwegian or international service or both is something many Christian immigrants appreciate as the study also found. *“Most activities in the church takes into consideration our African background and that is something I like a lot about Betel church”* states a respondent.

The Welfare services ran by both churches were noted to work mostly with new members from Africa and other foreign backgrounds. The new members have the opportunity to receive advice from the church to help them better understand the Trondheim society. Understanding the new culture is aimed at helping the new members to avoid conflict with the Norwegian law. The churches also cater for the needs of new members which could be in financial and material form. One of such is the voluntary offer to teach Norwegian lessons by some members for free to those who cannot speak the language. One of the respondents who credits this initiative states that *“I have gained so much from this offer to learn basic Norsk without paying any tuition. This gave me the opportunity to get a job in a grocery shop”.*

Another respondent recounts the story of her first job interview in Trondheim and equally feels that the Norsk course organised to help newcomers in WFMI women meeting played a great role for her to be employed. As stated by the respondent:

*“The language lessons organised by our WFMI women meeting is very important. It gave me the opportunity to express myself in a few words in Norsk which was the basic requirement for my first job in Trondheim as a cleaner. Today I have moved on, as I now teach in a*

*kindergarten. However, I will tell you that cleaning job meant a whole lot to me as a beginner in Norway. Presently am teaching the language to other new members in our group because I understand the importance of learning the language as a newcomer in the country”.*

**Table 7: Respondents View on their engagement and relationship with BPC and VFMI churches**

Engagement rating	Number of Christian Immigrants (BPC and VFMI)	Percentage of Christian Immigrants (BPC and VFMI)
Very poor	4	8%
Poor	5	10%
Fair	11	22%
Good	17	34%
Very good	13	26%
Total	N=50	100%

Source: Primary data 2020

Notes: respondents view on their engagement and relationship with the church was measured on a Five-point Likert scale where 1=very poor, 2=poor, 3=fair, 4=good and 5=very good.

Work relationship is defined in this study, as the ways in which the churches relate to and respond to the diversity of their membership.

Many of the respondents think that the church has a comfortable work relationship with them with over 80% who say that, the relationship is “fair” and above. Through many engagements and relationships, the churches have provided a platform for social bonding and has helped generated bridging capital established in trust relationships in the church. The trust relationships, many respondents argue, has helped to link them to many social and economic opportunities thereby contributing to their social integration in Trondheim. Coleman (1990), states, the social connectivity amongst people and groups is the single most important relevant element of growth and productivity which helps individuals to achieve certain ends that would normally be very difficult to achieve.

Most respondents think that the creation of a special women meeting groups in both churches which is design to foster the welfare and development of women in the churches has helped

in their social integration in Trondheim. The meetings that take place in a face to face setup according to many women has generated understanding and help them build social capital which in many cases is transferred out of the main church settings. According to Furseth and Society (2008), when people understand each other, they build trust that gradually develops into a more generalised trust with profound effects on the society.

The pastor of VFMI prides the vision of the church on the need to capture an international audience in Trondheim and beyond. VFMI church records show that, most of their members are Christians immigrants of African background and according to one of the elders of the church, many of the activities of the church are tailored to suit the need of the immigrant Christians.

Many of the immigrant youths in VFMI say they feel comfortable with the way VFMI church relates through her Youth group with them. The summer workshops in particular, organised every year, empowers the youths with important skills. As stated by a respondent from a Liberian background:

*“I really enjoy being part of this youth activity because it makes feel different. This workshop always gives me the opportunity to meet with other African immigrants out of VFMI church with whom we share our stories. The inspiration I got from the summer youth workshop in 2016, encouraged me to undertake further studies in Trondheim and I will gladly tell you that, the decision is what changed my life in Norway”.*

According to some of the respondents, the connections that both churches have with other organisations has created a medium that many Christian immigrants of African background have used to facilitate their social integration in Trondheim. Both churches have links with other organisations, that have pave way to the organisation of various joint activities which has help many members to create new social networks and find true friendship in many people out of their main churches. This opinion is shared by Rubin (2012), who states, that social networks should be considered as significant tools of social integration.

BPC act as part of the KLF, which according to the views of some respondents, creates an opportunity for leaders of BPC to relate with leaders from other organisations. The relationship usually sees the organization of joint prayers for the city of Trondheim or joint community gospel outreach. Christian immigrants working with representatives from different organisation have the opportunity to benefit from linking social capital that is likely to be generated in such settings. VFMI engagement with the African Network Resource

Centre in Trondheim was noted by the study as a programme that provides many opportunities for immigrants to facilitate their social integration in Trondheim.

The study also found that, VFMI collaborates with the Multicultural Church Network. Through this network, the pastor and members of his church has the opportunity to work with other pastors of both local and international churches to discuss matters pertaining to church growth and other social issues. Such connections have enhanced social integration and have been described as linking social capital, which is a capital that could generate from the links between individuals or organisations that are outside peer limits and cut cross status. This linking capital according most respondents have allowed them to gain access to resources outside their normal spheres.

As understood by the study, churches through various activities, serve as a network of people from different backgrounds who may readily give help to those in need. The networks are good example of Putnam’s (2000), concept of bridging social capital. The church can promote and facilitate the development of social networks across ethnic, linguistic, and racial lines and may address the needs of individuals faster than other public institutions (Allen, 2018).

75% of the respondents say they are satisfied with the way the church has so far conducted its activities and therefore think that the church has played an important role for their social integration in Trondheim.

**Table 8: Respondents level of satisfaction with the role the churches have played in their Social integration in Trondheim**

Level of Satisfaction	Number of respondents (BPC and VFMI)	Percentage of respondents (BPC and VFMI)
Dissatisfied	11	22%
Neutral	4	8%
Satisfied	35	75%
Total	N=50	100%

Source: Primary data 2020

Notes: Respondents satisfaction with the role of the churches in promoting their social integration in Trondheim was measured on a Three-point Likert scale where 1=dissatisfied, 2=neutral, and 3=satisfied

To many of the respondents, the churches through various activities have function as some sort of an outward-looking intergroup network that has linked individuals and groups within a broader social structure. The social structure is sustained based on general trust in each other including Christian immigrants of African backgrounds. Putnam (2000), describes this trust as bridging social capital and argue that, it constitutes a vital element of social integration. His argument is that, members of a group show cohesion as they discuss and share their stories with one another. Trust is then generated in these discussions, which facilitates the coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. Trust, he further argues, are indicators of bonding social capital that members of a group can enjoy as they interact.

Some authors view the relationship between individuals and a group as a productive tool that makes it possible to achieve certain ends that would have been difficult (Bourdieu et al., 2019, Szreter and Woolcock, 2004). The study also noted that, social capital is built in the church through different programs and activities as individuals gain access to resources, ideas, information, money, and other services.

The Women meeting of VFMI is structured to provide information and other services that are meant to help newly arrived Christian immigrants to be able to socially integrate in Trondheim within the shortest time possible. The meeting has as priority in their agenda to help new members gain information on how and where they can easily get jobs. Some members are given financial assistance as their case may demand and other forms of support like helping members to move from one house to the other. Most respondents are proud of the solidarity amongst them and credits that to the activities in the church. As stated by a member of the women group in VFMI:

*“The reason why I find the role of the church through various activities to be very important to my integration process in Trondheim is that, when I newly arrived, I had no contact but the church open her doors for me and the women meeting welcomed me as one of them. It is thanks to their early guidance and counselling that I managed to be integrated in Trondheim”.*

Social integration is likely feasible once newly arrived immigrants are accepted as early as possible as members of the society (Mc Millan et al, 2005). This role can be played by the church (Adogame, 2013).

The churches run a welfare service with the aim of providing a physical as well as emotional support to members. Members who are new in the country are sometimes offered material

and financial support. This support may constitute money, food items, clothing and practical information depending on the need of the person. As stated by a respondent from a from a Kenyan background:

*“The welfare ministry was very helpful to me when I first moved into Trondheim. I remember the first winter jacket I ever owned in this country was a gift to me from the welfare ministry at BPC. I have to be honest with you because I did not have any money at that time to buy a winter jacket, I will never forget that gift. It was in the month of January and I was coming from Kenya.*

Regular members of the church may also benefit from the welfare ministry especially when they face difficult moments like sickness, loss of a job, and the loss of a love one amongst others.

To ensure that the needs of newcomers is properly taken care of, the study found that, every month BPC church organises a fellowship in the church to educate newcomers on how to cope with life in their new community (Trondheim). The main pastor of the international service at BPC, oversees the fellowship. Christian organisations can provide opportunities of fast ties to immigrants and that is likely to help them easily settle in their receiving societies (Foley and Hoge, 2007).

A budget has been allocated to run the welfare ministry at BPC. The pastor and other leaders of the church also offer prayers, counsel, and financial support when they go through emotional problems such as the loss of a close relation, family crisis, sickness, and divorce. In addition, new members are given advice on how to cater for their children to avoid a cultural shock. Information about easy ways of finding a job and accommodation is also shared to enable the new members to socially integrate in Trondheim.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion and Suggested Recommendations**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents a summary of findings of the study. Suggestions on how the churches as well as the government of Norway can create and improve on certain services that may facilitate the integration of Christian immigrants of African background in Trondheim in particular and the Norwegian society at large are also stated.

### **6.2 Conclusion**

This thesis has explored the role Christian churches play in the social integration process of African immigrants in Norway. Social integration policies in Norway is aim to promote mixed inclusive communities by providing equal opportunity, encourage participation, and maintain solidarity for all people living in Norway (Valenta, 2007, Meld.St.30, 2015, 2016). As supported by this study, churches play an important role in the social integration of newcomers.

Both churches in the study work with Christians of African background, and the churches present an important platform through which Christian immigrants of African background as members of the church establishes strong social connections with other members and groups made up of Norwegians and other residents.

The study found that, social capital is built amongst members as they interact with one another and with different groups in the church. The different programmes and activities of the two churches helps members to build trust with one another and provides opportunity for intimate friendship. The strong sense of belonging and the trust amongst Christian immigrants of African background and other members of the church is a vital resource for the social integration of the African immigrants.

To some respondents, the churches have helped to reduce the pressure of settling down in Trondheim as an immigrant. Many of the respondents through their interactions with other residents in the church told about receiving job contacts, some financial support, free Norwegian language courses, educative talks and other skills that has facilitated their social integration in Trondheim.

The study also found that immigrant's perception of their own social integration depends on factors such as their Norwegian language proficiency skill, their access to socio-economic



opportunities, the employment opportunities available to them, and their freedom of movement and expression in Trondheim.

Many of the respondents self-assessed themselves as proficient in the Norwegian language. Language was not much seen a factor in unskilled job acquisition as it is, in skilled job applications. Few of the respondents admitted that, they do not speak Norwegian language and says that, remains a handicap to their social integration.

Many respondents saw the church not just as a place of spiritual growth, but like a home or community for them. Church programs and activities constituted an integral part of their own very living in Trondheim. Programmes and activities such as the youth group, women meeting, church weddings, baby showers, baptism and child dedication was emphasized as a way to bring Christians together and build connections that may facilitate social integration. The church serves as an important source of social capital as they help to bridge and break members of the church and the Trondheim society because of their bridging and bonding behaviours (Jackson et al., 2016, Adogame, 2013)

However, it will be fair to say that because only few studies exist of the role of the church in the social integration of migrants in Trondheim, and the fact that the study was conducted on a small sample, generalised conclusion cannot be made.

### **6.3 Suggested Recommendation and Issues for Further Research**

While the study only covers two churches and has a limited number of informants, some ideas, and suggestions for improving policy that can facilitate the incorporation of immigrants in the Norwegian society and other countries came up through the research. These are described below.

It is clear from the study that the churches have shown goodwill to immigrants and instituted structures in the churches that can help facilitate their social integration. At the same time, the study found that these structures are not permanent, and the churches are not required to have them. At the moment, activities rely very much on donations and the services of volunteers. The churches are therefore vulnerable in terms of consistency and long-term planning. It could do the immigrants better if the churches could have a permanent teaching course ran by a body under a permanent budget where immigrants can receive language course and other skills.

The state could also work with the church to facilitate the provision of social services. Churches could play an important role in terms of engaging in counselling programs and other information that can help immigrants to quickly build essential human capacity that can facilitate their social integration. There is thus much underutilized potential in terms of the state financing the church to create more social programmes and organise seminars and workshops where professionals from state institutions can come and educate new members about the Norwegian law and to help them know their duties and rights as residents of Norway.

The study also found that the churches largely did not extend help to immigrants out their main churches or to people of different beliefs and sexual orientation. This can make the church to be guilty of social exclusion. Some scholars have warn of the dark side of social capital which may sometimes lead to the potential exclusion of others (Portes, 1998, Briggs, 2004, Quibria, 2003, Adogame, 2013). The study has noted that, the help provided by the churches is aimed at benefiting those who are members of the church and share the same Christian belief. It could do many more immigrants good if the church considers extending help to migrants of different beliefs and sexual orientations.

The church could also encourage her members to participate in training and other social service programs organized by the government and other agencies rather than to wait on the church and religious related social programs which comes up not many times in a year. These may enable the members of the churches to get access to more information and expose them to larger interactions. A larger interaction may help immigrants find more connections that may facilitate their social integration.

Lastly, the study has noted that the two churches have instituted structures to work with Christian immigrants and has provided the necessary platform through which social capital is generated, and that has eventually been used by the Christian immigrants to facilitate their social integration in Trondheim. However, because the study was conducted only in two churches with a limited number of respondents, more research will be needed to better understand the role of churches in social integration. Further research is equally needed to provide the best possible means in which the church can work with the state and other organizations or communities to facilitate the social integration of migrants.

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## **Appendix**

### **A: CONSENT LETTER TO THE RESPONDENTS**

My name is Ekumbe Mabel Mesoe, Master student in Globalisation and Sustainable Development NTNU. I am carrying out a study on The Influence of Christian Organisation in Promoting Social Integration of African immigrants in Trondheim. My work is focused on two Christian churches Betel Pentecostal Church (BPC) and Victorious Faith Ministry International (VFMI) in Trondheim.

The aim is to find out the role Christian organisation play to promote social integration of African immigrants in Trondheim. The study seeks to evaluate how the programmes and activities and connections the churches have within and outside of the church help to facilitate social integration of African immigrants in Trondheim and in a larger society.

You have been selected participation in this activity as a Christian immigrant of African background and therefore requested to voluntarily participate in the study and will not bind you to any lawsuit. Therefore, please feel free to express your opinion as all information will be kept confidential and your identity will be anonymous. Participation is voluntary and you can withdraw your consent without any justification and at any time you want.

### **B. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR LEADERS OF THE CHURCH**

#### **To church Leader/Pastor**

Name-----Age----- Position-----

Nationality-----.Occupation-----

- 1) What is your role and position in the church?
- 2) Can you give a short history of the church?
- 3) Can you say a little bit about the activities you have?
- 4) How many nationalities are represented in your church?
- 5) Why do you think citizens from different backgrounds fellowship at your church?
- 6) What will you say the role of the church is in terms of attending to people from many different nationalities?

- 7) Do you have many African Christians in your congregation? From where?
- 8) Are they mainly permanent or temporary residents?
- 9) Would you say the church plays a role in terms of integration of immigrants? If so in which ways? Do you have examples?
- 10) Is integration a stated goal of the church?
- 11) Is your church receiving funds from the Norwegian government? Are any of those funds related to integration work?
- 12) What do you think are the actual and potential role of institutions such as church in terms of immigrants' integration?
- 13) How would you define integration?
- 14) Do you consider yourself as "integrated" why? Why not?
- 15) Is there anything related to these questions you think it would be relevant for me to look into my research?
- 16) Do you have anything to add?

**C: SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW FOR CHRISTIAN IMMIGRANTS OF AFRICAN BACKGROUND WORSHIPING IN BPC AND VFMI CHURCHES IN TRONDHEIM**

**Socio-demographic data of the respondents**

1. Sex    A) male        B) Female
2. Age    A) 20-26    B) 27-33    C) 34-40    D)41-47    E)48-54    F) 55 and Above
3. How long have you lived in Trondheim (Years)?
4. What is your occupational status? A) Student    B) Unskilled Service    C) Skilled  
D) Self Employed    E) Unemployed
5. Educational Level    A) Primary level    B) Secondary    C) Professional training,  
University Education

6. What is your Norwegian language communication skills? A) Very Good B) Good  
C) Fair D) Below Average E) Poor
7. Marital Status A) Single- Never married B) Married to immigrant of African  
background C) married to other nationality D) Divorced E) Widow/Widower
8. How has it been for you to settle in Trondheim? Have you settled permanently?
9. How long have you been coming to this church and participating in activities?
10. What are the different activities and programs in carried out by your church?
11. Do you belong to any specific group in the church? If Yes which group and if No,  
why?
10. What prompted you to attend this church specifically?
11. Do you have other members from same country as you?
12. Do you have Christians of other African backgrounds in your church?
13. Have you been meeting with other fellow Christians of church? If yes where and for  
what reason
14. Have you ever received help from other Christians? If yes, how?
15. What does it mean for you to belong to a church?
16. What is your view about the working relationship between your church and Christian  
immigrants of African background? A) Very poor B) Poor C) Fair D) Good  
E) Very Good
17. Which factors will you consider as the most important to your social integration  
A) B) C) D) E)  
F) G) H) I) J)
18. How can you rate your Norwegian language proficiency skill?  
A) Very good B) Good C) Fair D) Below Average and E) Poor
19. How will you rate your access to socio economic opportunities in Trondheim? A) Very



Difficult B) Difficult C) Average, D) Easy E) Very Easy

20. How satisfied are you with your freedom of movement and expression in Trondheim?

A) Satisfied B) Neutral C) Dissatisfied

21. How would you define social integration? What would you say are the most important aspects of social integration in your view?

22. How do you perceive your social integration in Trondheim? A) Very good B) Good  
C) Fair D) Poor E) Very Poor

23. Would you say the church plays any role to promote your social integration in Trondheim? If yes, how?

24. How satisfied are you with the role the church plays in promoting the social integration of Christian immigrants of African background in your church? A) Satisfied B) Neutral

C) Dissatisfied

25. Do you consider yourself socially integrated in Trondheim? If yes, how? If no, why not?

26. What does it /would it mean for you to socially integrated in Norway?

27. Is there anything more the church could do in terms of facilitating your social integration in Trondheim?

28. Do you have any other thing you wish to add or discuss?

Thank you for participating.