

Sandhya Paudel

Social Integration of Nepalese Immigrants into Norwegian Society: Enabling and Challenging Factors

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Supervisor: Ragnhild Lund

Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU)

Faculty of Social and Educational Sciences

Department of Geography



Abstract

This research is about social integration of Nepalese immigrant in Norway. It aims to examine the enabling and challenging factor in the social integration of Nepalese immigrants in Norway. The research used qualitative methods to analyse the perspectives of Nepal immigrants based on their own life experiences and perceptions while integrating into Norwegian society. The empirical data were collected through life history interviews with sixteen immigrants and two focus group discussions. The first focus group consisted of three participants and another was composed of four new participants. To get a wider prospect, their integration was analysed within four dimensions of social integration as structural, cultural, interactive, and identification. These dimensions were examined with the help of the following indicators: employment, Norwegian language proficiency, social connection and sense of belongingness.

This study found that the Nepalese immigrants face more challenges while there are few enabling factors in their path to social integration in Norway. Lack of Norwegian Language skills, educational background incompatible to the demands of Norwegian labour market, hidden discrimination at the workplace, weak social interaction with the host population are major hindrances for their integration. In contrast, when one overcomes these challenges, they become enabling factors of integration. Thus, Nepalese immigrants who wished to stay longer have enhanced their Norwegian language proficiency acquired education/skills according to the demands in the Norwegian market. However, in terms of social interaction, on the one hand, Nepalese immigrants are confined within their own community and social networks and on the other hand, their social interaction with Norwegians is very formal and nominal. Young immigrants, immigrants with a refugee background and the immigrants who have already stayed in Norway for at least a decade showed their attachment to the place and the Norwegian society. However, they pointed that the immense cultural differences exist between Nepalese and Norwegian society. Despite these challenges, these fractions of Nepalese immigrants wish to stay longer in the country, while the recent immigrants wish to return as soon as they accomplished their mission in Norway. In the perspectives of recent immigrants, Norway is one of the challenging countries to integrate for Nepalese immigrants.

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Abbreviations

CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics, Nepal
EC	European Commission
EEA	European Economic Area
EU	European Union
IMDi	Directorate of Integration and Diversity
IMISCOE	International Migration, Integration and Social Cohesion in Europe
NAV	Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration
NRNA	The Non-Residential Nepalese Association
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
NSD	Norwegian Centre for Research Data
NTNU	Norwegian University of Science and Technology
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
SSB	Statistics Norway
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDSPD	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In the recent years, Norway has seen an unprecedented influx of refugee and asylum seekers. It is one of the tolerant nations towards immigrants (Steen, 2016) while the large inflows of immigrants and the immigration policies attempting to deal with the influx have become a prominent issue in immigrant-receiving nations across the globe (Carlsson & Rooth, 2007; Fetzer, 2000; Turper, Iyengar, Aarts, & Van Gerven, 2015). The most alarming challenge that the immigration bring is the social integration. Undeniably, integration is not easy as people have different socio-cultural backgrounds and diversity.

Norway is a welfare state based on the policies of egalitarianism. The foundation of the Norwegian society is built on equality and equal opportunity for all (Hagelund, 2003a, p. 174). Consequently, all the members of society are united into the welfare state's major projects to create and maintain equality in opportunities and access to welfare goods (ibid). In principle, none of the society members, whether the natives or the foreigners should be left behind. At the beginning of 2018, around 17.3 percent of Norwegian population was composed of immigrants (SSB, 2018a). To address the integration challenges, Norwegian integration policy focus on equal rights, opportunities and obligations for the entire population, regardless of ethnic, cultural background or nationality and maintain solidarity and tolerance promoting multi-ethnic inclusive society (White Paper No.6. [2012] 2013).

This research is based on the social integration of Nepalese immigrants residing in Norway. In compared to other immigrants, the proportion of the Nepalese immigrants is very small in Norway. Furthermore, the Nepalese immigrants in Norway are dispersed in different cities. Besides, Nepalese immigrants are generally the first-generation immigrants in Norway. I intended to study their struggle as a newcomer to integrated into the new society from their perspectives. The main aim of this study is to examine the enabling and challenging factors that Nepalese immigrant's face while they try to integrate into the Norwegian Society. This research is based on a qualitative methodology and the primary source of the research data was collected from sixteen in-depth life history interviews and two focus group discussions organised among seven participants. In the focus group discussion, the first group consisted of three participants while the second group was composed of four new participants. Though the research subjects had many characteristics variations, their length of stay in Norway was one of the prime criteria for their selection in this research. All the informants in the interviews had been living Norway

for more than three years to a maximum of seventeen years while the participants in the focus group discussions were the recent immigrants with a stay of less than three years. To get a wider prospect, their integration is analysed with respect to Heckmann's (2005) four dimensions of social integration: structural, cultural, interactive, and identification. Each of these dimensions is examined with an integration indicator. The integration indicators are influenced by the analytical framework of Ager and Strange (2008). The four indicators used in this research was employment, Norwegian language proficiency, social connections and sense of belongingness.

1.2 Justification of study

In the face of growing and diversifying migration flows, immigrant integration is increasingly present in academic, policy and public debates and this trend is likely to continue in the foreseeable future (Alba & Foner, 2015; Dancygier & Laitin, 2014; Sobolewska, Galandini, & Lessard-Phillips, 2017). Particularly in Norway, debates about integration, immigration policy, multiculturalism, national identity has flourished (Eriksen, 2013). There are attempts in Norway and elsewhere in the literature to explore integration struggles of major immigrants group particularly of refugees while the minorities are often ignored. While Nepalese immigrants are relatively small groups, their integration equally contributes to success or failure of integration policies in Norway. Even though I don't claim for a generalization of my findings, but I believe that it will certainly contribute to the understanding of social integration and its elements from the perception of Nepalese immigrants who are also the 'immigrants in minority' in Norway.

I have always been keen on learning how unity exists in diversity among the people. As an international student in Norway, it was very interesting for me to know about Norwegian society, its social system and how it operates. Norway was a homogeneous society, with the flow of immigrants with diversified backgrounds, it has increasingly been multicultural (Andersson, 2012; Cooper, 2005). Whereas, Nepal has been traditionally a heterogeneous society with social-cultural diversity (Sharma, 1983; Yadava, 2007, p. 3). It was interesting to know how people with a diversified socio-cultural background approach social integration in an international arena.

1.3 Objective and research questions

This study intends to understand Nepalese immigrant's perspectives on social integration in Norway. The main aim of this study is to examine the enabling and challenging factors that immigrants face while integrating into the Norwegian Society. The research aspires to understand these elements through the perception of Nepalese immigrants in Norway. To address the main theme of the study following research questions were formulated

How do Nepalese immigrants understand social integration in Norway?

Do they feel socially integrated into the Norwegian society?

How do they position themselves in the social integration process?

What are the major enabling and challenging factors in their integration?

1.4 Outline of the study

The study will be outlined in seven chapters with concluding reflections.

Chapter one: The first chapter includes an introduction to the study. Next, I will give justification of the study and share my personal interest in the research topic. Next, I will explain the objective and research question. Then, come this outline of the study.

Chapter two: It consists of the contextual understanding required to understand this research. It provides a detailed background of the study. This chapter is composed of; the social-cultural context of Nepalese society, the emigration history of Nepalese people; historical perspectives immigration to Norway; major cornerstones in the development of Norwegian integration policy, the diversity in Norwegian population and their attitude towards immigrants.

Chapter three: In the third chapter, I will present the theoretical understanding of immigrants integration. I will explain the foundation of the conceptual framework used in this research. This chapter will be concentrated on explaining the four dimensions of social integration and four integration indicators applied in the research to analysis the findings. In addition, I will explain the concept of gender and how I am using it in this study. Finally, I will summarise on how the theory is operationalized and applied in the research.

Chapter four: In this chapter, I will explain the research methodology of this research. It will give an overview of the methodological choice, the techniques and methods employed before, during and after the fieldwork for this study.

Chapter five: This chapter will present the major findings from the fieldwork. The major findings from the interviews and the focus group discussions will be presented within different categories. These categories will further serve as a basis for the analysis and discussion chapter.

Chapter six: In this chapter, I will analyse the major findings obtained from the fieldwork. I will have related them to the existing theories and compare them to various relevant research works done in the past and seek answers to all the research questions of this study.

Chapter seven: In this chapter, will provide a short reflection on the major findings of the study and conclude my thesis.

2 Contextual Understanding

Contextual understanding of the research topic is utmost important to understand the research itself. In this chapter, I am briefly illustrating the social-cultural context of Nepalese society, the emigration history of Nepalese people, their presences in Norway and the overall immigration history to Norway in brief. I aim to pin down some of the major accomplishments in the development of integration policies in Norway, explore the diversity in Norwegian population and their attitude towards immigrants as depicted in various research.

2.1 The Nepalese socio-cultural context

Nepal is a South Asian country, between the Himalayas of China and India. Nepal is a geographically, climatically, ecologically, ethnically, biologically, culturally and linguistically a diverse country (Yadava, 2007, p. 3). There are 126 officially recognized caste and ethnic groups speaking 123 different languages within 147181 square kilometres (Yadava, 2014). Each ethnic group has a distinct cultural heritage. Nepali is the state language, which also works as a lingua franca in this diverse community (Sharma, 1983). According to the Nepal Census Report, 2011, the population of Nepal is approximate population is 29,000,000. It as is a secular nation where most of the population are Hindus (81.3 percent) and Buddhist (9.0percent) while Christianity, Islam, Jain and other ethnic religions are minorities (CBS, 2014). Interestingly, Hindu and Buddhist accept each other's religious practices and usually follow the combination of both.

In terms of socio-cultural background, Nepali society was shaped by culture and religion historically (Sharma, 1983). Noticeably, socio-cultural differences between Nepal and Norway is so immense that they seem entirely different worlds of living. The differences are particular experiences in language, lifestyle, a way of living, education system, and laws. From gender perspectives, Norway has far better statistics in gender quality while Nepalese society is still dominated by Patriarchy. Women in Nepal are one of the most disadvantaged groups, are the most victims of poverty, power imbalances and gender-based violence. They face restrictions to access of resources in most spheres of life and are exposed to social exclusion (Moghadam, 2007).

However, Nepalese society is gradually transforming *“from its feudalistic, patriarchal, exclusionary, caste/clan-based, and religious past to a more capitalistic, individualistic, mobile, secular, plural, open, and change-oriented society over the time”*(Parajuli et al., 2015,

p. 3). Socio-cultural harmony and the existences of socio-cultural groups have been exceptional characteristics of Nepalese society (Sharma, 1983). Several authors have pointed out that that cultural mix is a unique characteristic of the Nepali society (Parajuli et al., 2015).

2.2 History of Nepalese emigration

History of International migration to and from Nepal is contested as scholars point to different historical epochs. However, the Trans-Himalayan trade between China, Tibet, India, and Nepal is recorded as the earliest form of movement to and from Nepal of which origin can be traced as far back as 500 BCE (Sijapati & Limbu, 2017, p. 5).

Formal international migration for employment of Nepalese people began with the formalisation of the recruitment of young Nepali males into the British Armed forces in 1886. Over 200,000 Nepalese men fought in the First and Second World Wars on the side of Britain, which were the earliest instances of a concerted recruitment of Nepali men to work abroad (CBS, 2014). Following this, the Tripartite Agreement between Nepal, India and Britain in 1947 facilitated newly independent India to recruit Nepalese into its army. Eventually, two centuries later, the tradition of recruiting Nepalese youth into foreign armies (the British, Indian, French and also in the Singapore police) continues (Sijapati & Limbu, 2017, pp. 5-6). Besides, throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, the Nepali migrant population dispersed to India, Bhutan, Burma, Malaysia (then Malaya), Thailand, Bangladesh (then part of India) and Tibet (Sijapati & Limbu, 2017, p. 8).

The phenomenon of international migration from Nepal to foreign lands has accelerated rapidly in the last two decades (Sijapati & Limbu, 2017, p. 9). Concurrently, the booming economies in the Gulf and Southeast Asia mainly; United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait and Malaysia; have become new avenues of employment for Nepalese youth. Besides, there are also a significant number of youth migrants migrating to Australia, North America and Europe as au pairs and students (Sijapati & Limbu, 2017, p. 9).

2.3 Nepalese presence in Norway

Nepalese immigrants are one of the latecomers and have a relatively small community in Norway. The Non-Residential Nepalese Association (NRNA) in Norway claims that Nepalese immigration to Norway dates back to more than 40 years ago (NRNA, 2018). However, Nepalese living in Norway today have come to Norway during the last 10 years. However, it is not easy to know the exact figures of Nepalese population living in Norway. Based on the information provided by different Nepalese societies in the major cities of Norway, the NRNA-Norway chapter estimates that there are between 1500 to 2000 Nepalese immigrants living in Norway. However, according to the data of Statistics Norway, there are 1967 registered Nepalese immigrants at the beginning of 2018 (SSB, 2018c).

The Majority of Nepalese migrants in Norway are students and there are few coming for work and family reunification. Norway has been an attractive place for Nepalese students for higher education and skilled employment. One of the major portions of Nepalese community in Norway is composed of Nepalese of Bhutanese origin (556 people) who came to Norway via third-country resettlement program of the UNHCR from the beginning of 2007. Though these people have roots in Bhutan, they lived almost two decades of their life in Nepal and have similar socio-cultural characteristics to that of other Nepalese. Thus, this thesis treats them as a fraction of broader Nepalese community in Norway.

Most of the Nepalese immigrants have established various associations of their community in major cities in Norway which has kept them connected to each other. Besides, Nepalese people living in Norway are generally the first-generation immigrants with deep-rooted socio-cultural connections with Nepal. However, it is not difficult to see that upcoming second generation of Nepalese Immigrants have their own unique dual identity form Nepal and Norway.

2.4 Immigration to Norway

Norway received independence from Sweden in 1905. Initially, it was not a destination country but was a population prone to emigration. Around 850,000 Norwegians emigrated to foreign countries between 1825 and 1945, making Norway second only to Ireland in terms of emigrant's percentage of the population (Cooper, 2005; Hagelund, 2003a, p. 407). By 1890, Norwegians emigrated as temporary labour migrants to the United States mostly and as many as 150,000 are estimated to have eventually returned to Norway for permanent settlement (Cooper, 2005).

Norway gained a reputation worldwide for humanitarian assistance in 1921 when the Norwegian Arctic explorer and diplomat Fridtjof Nansen became first High Commissioner for Refugees of the League of Nation's (now United Nations). Nansen was also the inspiration for the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), established in 1946 to help refugees from World War II (Cooper, 2005). The common labour market between Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland (Iceland joined in 1982) established in the 1950s accelerated the flow of migrants in Norway.

Besides, a common passport-control area added in the late 1950s allowed citizens and foreigners to travel freely between the Nordic countries (Cooper, 2005). The immigration of migrants from the non-western countries to Norway can be dated back to 1960s. In the analysis of Mohn & Fangen, (2016, p. 140) it has been common to speak of three categories of immigration to Norway, each characterized roughly by different dynamics. The first category consisted of labour migrants, the second category consisted those who came in the family reunification while the third category belongs to the refugees, asylum seekers and students.

By late 1968, there was an influx of predominantly young men, who were granted work permit if they could display a job offer (Hagelund, 2003a, p. 23); making Norway a country of net immigration (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, p. 288). The categories of immigration were halted when immigration stoppage was introduced in 1975, but paradoxically, the rate of immigration to Norway had increased. The stoppage mainly restricted labour migrants from the Third World, while the rate of labour migrants from Europe was held largely at a constant (Mohn & Fangen, 2016, p. 140). Besides, though expected to be temporary, these guest workers, remained in the country and initiated a self-perpetuating process of chain migration (Walseth, 2016).

The second categories of immigration mainly consisted of family reunification, in which parents, siblings and children of the former labour immigrants started a more permanent life in Norway (Mohn & Fangen, 2016, p. 140). Consequently, the rate of non-Western immigrants continued to increase even with the clear rejection of labour migrants from these regions (Mohn & Fangen, 2016, p. 140).

The immigration stoppage in Norway and similar actions were taken in Europe at the time and shifted migrant applications to the third category of immigrants (Hagelund, 2003a, p. 24). Immigration to Norway from these categories peaked in 1987/1988, such as; it received 1,680 refugees between 1978 and 1979 alone, more than 1,300 of whom were 'boat people' from Vietnam (Cooper, 2005; Hagelund, 2003a, p. 24).

Eventually, refugees and their closest family composed more than 60 percent of the total immigration to Norway; making Norway an average receiving country by the mid-1990s (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, p. 288). Likewise, between 1998 and 2002, there was a considerable increase in the number of asylum seeker entering Norway, peaking at 17,500 arrivals from a variety of countries (Mohn & Fangen, 2016). In addition, Norway experienced the remarkable flow of international students after the change in Norwegian immigration policy for students since the beginning of the 1990s. Precisely, from the educational perspective, of '*free education scheme*', the international student's mobility has increased in Norway (Brekke, 2006, p. 19).

Besides, Norway gradually opened its doors for labour migrants from non-EEA countries, especially highly skilled workers, making Norway one of the leading labour migration destinations in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development(OECD) (Thorud, 2018). In the late 2000s, most immigrants coming to Norway were again labour immigrants (Mohn & Fangen, 2016, p. 140).

However, the labour immigration is registering a fall since 2011; from 2014 to 2015, labour immigration decreased by 16 percent (Thorud, 2018). In contrast to many years of positive net-migration from other Nordic countries, Nordic net-migration was (roughly 2400) negative in 2016 (Thorud, 2018). However, roughly 14000 non-Nordic labour immigrants became residents of Norway in 2016 (Thorud, 2018). In addition, since the last decade, the unprecedented influx of refugee and asylum seekers from conflict-torn regions of Africa and the Middle East has been increasing rapidly in Norway (Steen, 2016).

2.5 Immigrant Integration policy debates in Norway

Immigration has been on the political agenda in Norway since the 1970s (Hagelund, 2002, p. 404). Similarly, the integration politics has evolved as a separate policy field; as an ideal for how multicultural Norway should develop and function (ibid). However, Hagelund (2003) mentions that until 1973, 'immigration' was not a big issue in Norway and thus "*the word immigration is not mentioned in any of the larger parties*" programmes (Hagelund, 2003a, p. 166).

2.5.1 During the 1960s and 1970s

In the late 1960s, the booming Norwegian economy and population shortage led Norway to accept labour migrants from Turkey, Morocco, Yugoslavia, and particularly Pakistan (Cooper, 2005). Soon after, concern aroused on the effect of the sudden increased flow of non-Nordic immigrant workers and the effects of the availability of cheap and vulnerable labour might have on Norwegian work and wage conditions. Besides, Norwegian political parties started viewing immigration as a political problem and there was apparent pressure on welfare state institutions and benefits (Hagelund, 2003b, p. 49). In addition, there were stories of migration mismanagement followed by the introduction of immigration restrictions from other European countries. Consequently, Norwegian government first White Paper¹ on immigration, published in 1973 suggested for a temporary stop to immigration (Hagelund, 2003b, p. 49).

The temporary immigration stop to immigration was intended to last only for a year, but the policy's proposal changed to a permanent arrangement as the government introduced an immigration stoppage in 1975. Hagelund (2003) noted that concerns about the new social division of immigrants underclass were major driving forces behind the introduction of 'full stop' to immigration in 1975 (Hagelund, 2003a, p. 174). It was the first legislation to formally impeded immigration to Norway, yet the new restrictions permitted the entry of skilled labour (Aalberg, Iyengar, & Messing, 2012, p. 100). Consequently, it shifted migrant applications to other channels such as asylum and family reunification (Hagelund, 2002).

The first waves of immigrants were met with demands of assimilation in Norway (Hagelund, 2002, p. 406; Walseth, 2016). In 1974, the White Paper presented to the Norwegian parliament stated that the decision on whether to adopt the majority culture or not was a matter of choice for the individual migrant (OECD 2009). The immigrants should themselves decide what kind of relationship they wished to have to the Norwegian society, and the authorities' responsibility was to ensure that they had the choice (St. meld. no. 39/1973-1974, p.8, 35-37 cited in Hagelund, 2002, p. 406).

2.5.2 During the 1980s

However, the assimilation model of immigration policy was officially rejected in the 1980s (Hagelund, 2002, p. 407). Besides, Hagelund (2002) shares that during the 1980s, the

¹ A White Paper is a document that presents current government policy on a particular subject but, at the same time, it invites comments and reflection concerning the issues it covers.

Norwegian politicians stopped referring Norway as a homogenous society and took a terminological change and started speaking about multicultural Norway (Hagelund, 2002, p. 402). While coming to the White Papers in 1988, replaced the idea of immigrants' *'freedom of choice'* with a notion of *'respect for immigrants' language and culture'*. The papers emphasize that there must be limitations to right to be different; the freedom of choice should not mean the freedom to stay completely outside the Norwegian society, such as, by not learning Norwegian and acquiring knowledge about the Norwegian society (St. meld. no. 39, 1987-1988, cited in Hagelund, 2003b, p. 49). Meaning, immigrants' cultures should be respected, but they should not choose to remain outside of the society by not actively doing something to achieve integration (Hagelund, 2002, p. 407).

Similarly, most of the founding principle of the post-1970 the immigration policies in Norway were anchored in the Immigration Act of 1988. While addressing the concerns of native population the Act also aimed for equal treatment for immigrants and native Norwegians. The act provided entry permission, border control mechanisms, and 'sanctions system' for the cancellation of permits, rejections, and expulsions. Whereas, foreigners required a visa to enter the country and migrant workers required a work permit. It also regulated the adjudication of applications, permanent expulsion, and subsequent deportation. Besides, the Immigration Act only exempted certain categories of workers who meet the requirements of the 'immigration stop' legislation established in 1975 (Cooper, 2005).

2.5.3 During the 1990s

Hagelund, (2002, p. 406) argues that integration has later been formulated in terms of *'obligations to participate'*. The idea of integration denotes achieving equality through equal opportunities, rights and duties to participate for everybody, irrespective of origin (St. meld. no. 17, 1996-1997, p. 9 cited in Hagelund, 2002, p. 406). The necessity of integration was a matter of migrant's own welfare and a precondition for a beneficial multicultural society. Besides, integration was linked to politics of welfare state and its success was seen in the values of cultural diversity (Hagelund, 2002, p. 407).

Hagelund (2003) argues during the 1990s, Norway further developed its integration policy with an increased focus on economic integration and anti-discrimination. The economic integration was approach with several policy documents such as the Governmental proposal on refugee policy (Stortingsmelding 17:1995/5 cited in Valenta & Bunar, 2010) and the Governmental

proposal on immigration and multicultural Norway (Stortingsmelding 17:1996/7 cited in Valenta & Bunar, 2010).

Likewise, integration was one of the primary agendas on Norwegian government's white paper in 1997 (Hagelund, 2003a, p. 167). It focused on specific actions for immigrant's language training, labour market initiatives and anti-discriminatory measures. Besides, lack of integration was seen as counter-image to the inclusive equalization mission of the welfare state. The Norwegian authorities focused primarily on equality between immigrants and native Norwegians in social and economic rights, participation, duties and opportunities (Hagelund, 2003b, p. 469).

Besides, the White Paper aspires reformulation of Norway as an exciting and enriching multicultural society founded on the fundamental values of equality, solidarity and freedom (Hagelund, 2003a, p. 167). According to Hagelund (2002, p. 408), when integration is understood as 'equal inclusion of individuals or of groups (as minorities) in the society, an organization or in different areas of society (such as the education system, working life, the housing sector)'; it is in a sense the long-time inclusionary ideal of Norwegian social democracy.

Norway joined European Economic Area (EEA) in 1994. It gave free access to immigrants from EEA to work in Norway. However, immigration from non-EEA countries was still restrictive during this period. Besides, in the years following 2004, many Eastern European countries joined EEA. The expansion of the EU significantly increased the number of labour immigrants in Norway. The new immigrant groups from Poland and the Baltic states brought their distinct problems and perspectives into immigration policy in Norway (Brochmann & Hagelund, 2012).

2.5.4 During the 2000s

Coming to 2000s, Norway relatively liberalised immigration and integration policies (Mohn & Fangen, 2016). Norway increasingly accepted refugees and asylum seekers primarily to meet international obligations (i.e. non-refoulement, which protects refugees from being returned to places where they under the threat of being prosecuted, hurt or killed), including treaties and conventions signed at the United Nations (Mateus, 2016).

Consequently, in 2005, A new Introduction Act was passed into national law and a universal introduction allowance for recent immigrants coming from countries other than those in the

European Union and EFTA (Skodvin & Wood, 2018, p. 76). Interestingly, the Introduction Act was not subject to political disagreement in the Norwegian parliament (Breidahl, 2017, p. 10). In the same period, notions of active citizenship and the importance of being self-sufficient became important principles in the general integration and welfare policies in Scandinavia (Breidahl, 2017, p. 10).

The introduction program is tightly regulated in Norway. According to the Introduction Act, all Norwegian municipalities which have received refugees have to set up introductory programmes (Steen, 2016). The Introduction Act requires compulsory attendance by newly arrived refugees in a full-time introduction programme which are paid by the authorities. The participants receive 300 hours' language tuition; information about Norwegian society; Individual assistance (job seeking, applying for education courses, etc.), and work placements are also important parts of the programme (Valenta & Bunar, 2010, p. 473).

According to Norwegian legislation who fails to participate in the programme are penalized through withdrawal of cash benefits. Besides, lack of participation in the introduction programme has negative consequences for refugees' judicial status in Norway (Valenta & Bunar, 2010, p. 473). The Introduction act states that participation in the programme is a prerequisite for both permanent resident status and Norwegian citizenship. Conversely, neither passing a test nor being financially self-sufficient (i.e., not depending on welfare benefits) are prerequisites for Norwegian citizenship. Considering current waves of refugees and asylum seekers from Syria and elsewhere, amendments to the citizenship requirements such as; passing a test about Norwegian society and a minimum level of Norwegian language for applicants between ages 18–67 have had also been made in Norway (Breidahl, 2017, p. 12).

In addition, the Norwegian immigration and asylum seekers policy are aligned with those from the EU. The EU pushed Norwegian subscription of the Schengen Agreement, allowing for European states' citizens to move freely between its borders (with the exception of UK and Ireland), as a way to keep the Nordic Passport-control, and because of the Dublin Convention² (implemented from 2002 AD), and the adoption of some rules of the Dublin II regulation in September 1st of 2003. Consequently, in 2017, 40 percent of all immigrants were from the EU -member countries (Thorud, 2018).

² "Convention determining the State responsible for examining applications for asylum lodged in one of the Member States of the European Communities" (Eur-lex.europa.eu, 2018)

2.5.5 Recent integration policies

The Norwegian integration policy is currently the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Inclusion (AID), along with the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) and the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) (Mohn & Fangen, 2016, p. 149).

Norway is a 'welfare-state', and it is the State's responsibility to maintain the cultures of minorities living in Norway. Scholars like Akkerman and Hagelund (2007) suggest calling Norwegian immigration policy as a '*de facto multiculturalism*' (Akkerman & Hagelund, 2007, pp. 197-198); meaning, the government is launching concrete actions targeting inclusion of immigrants into the society without officially labelling the policy as multiculturalism. Unfortunately, in a public discourse, the non-Western' immigrants are considered to generate costs for the Norwegian state and to be culturally distinctive. Even though the recent Norwegian immigration policy is aimed at all immigrants, the immigrants from Asia, Africa, Latin America and Oceania, except Australia and New Zealand, might be seen as the policy's main target (Nikielska-Sekuła, 2016, p. 132).

The White Paper to the Norwegian Parliament named as '*A comprehensive integration policy – diversity and community*', (En helhetlig integreringspolitikk – mangfold og fellesskap) are the latest (launched on 26 October 2012) to deal with the opportunities and challenges of being a country and a society with immigration. It states that the most important goal for the Norwegian Government's integration policy is to ensure that all people living in Norway should be able to utilise their resources and participate in the community. It commands that all public authorities have a responsibility to meet the integration policy goals. The existing policy expects all public authorities to take responsibility in implementation and meet the goals of integration policies. It explains that no person should be discriminated against or excluded because of their immigrant background. It further states that the inhabitants of Norway have rights and obligations. They should have the opportunity to participate in and contribute to working and social life according to their abilities.

It states that the fundamental values of Norwegian immigration policy are based on primary values of Norwegian society such as are primarily based on freedom of speech, freedom of religion and belief, solidarity, tolerance, equality, gender equality, socio-economic equality, participation in working life, democracy and civil society, protection of children's rights' (*White Paper No.6.[2012]*, 2013, p. 12). Besides, the White Paper acknowledges cultural diversity and

multilingualism as national resources that contribute to the development of Norwegian society. Likewise, it underlines the fact that if employed, immigrants contribute to the economic growth of Norwegian society.

Nevertheless, the White Paper recognises its own need for an immigrant workforce and thus aims to provide employment conditions for newcomers. It stresses that for immigrants ‘employment is the key to participation, financial independence and equality’ (*White Paper No.6.[2012]*, 2013, p. 4). Similarly, it proclaims that access to job positions must not be limited by gender or ethnic background or and all newcomers must be able to utilise their skills in employment. Women’s participation in the labour market is especially underlined.

Another important area mentioned in the White Paper No.6. [2012] is education and equal opportunities for children with an immigrant background. It accepts that successful education can lead to a rewarding job or career and thus, their full access to education and provisions for solutions fitting their needs are priorities by the policy. Likewise, basic human rights which directly influence the situation and promotes the well-being of immigrant families such as; employment, education, the right to health care and housing, non-discrimination and the right to choose a livelihood are of high importance for the White Paper No.6. [2012].

Overall, the Norwegian integration policy since 1975 can be summed up as ‘*restricted and controlled immigration*’ giving priority to refugees’ integration and ‘*real equality*’ between Norwegians and settled immigrants (Hagelund, 2002, p. 404). Real equality refers that all settled immigrants have equal legal rights and practical opportunities to have access to Norwegian resources and promoting their participation and inclusion into Norwegian society (Cooper, 2005).

2.6 Diversity and attitudes towards immigrants

The population in Norway was about 5.2 million at the beginning of 2018 (SSB, 2018d). There were 746 700 immigrants and 170 000 Norwegian-born to immigrant parents in Norway making a total of 916 625 immigrants (SSB, 2018c). Immigrants thus accounted for 14.1 percent of the total population in Norway while including Norwegian-born with immigrant parents they count for 17.3 percent (SSB, 2018a). The number of immigrants grew by 21 700 in 2017, which is the lowest percentage growth in the last 20 years(SSB, 2018a). But the number of Norwegian-born to immigrant parents grew by 11 200 in the same period and they

accounted for 3.2 percent (SSB, 2018c). These two groups have a background from 221 different countries and independent regions (SSB, 2018a).

Besides, Syrian immigrants are relatively new to refugees in Norway, who had the highest growth in both 2016 and 2017. At the beginning of 2018, there were 27 400 immigrants from Syria, making a fifth largest group of immigrants in Norway. Within the EU nations, with 98 200 persons, Polish immigrants are the largest group; with 38 400 persons Lithuanians second largest group; with 35 800, Swedes are in third place with 28 800, Somalians are the fourth group of immigrants in Norway (SSB, 2018a). There is great diversity, but data on general living conditions reveals a clear basic pattern of inequality between indigenous and 'new' Norwegians, particularly those from Asia, Africa and Latin America (Brochmann & Hagelund, 2012).

Tracking back to the history of immigration to Norway, by the 1970s, with a total of 18.766 legal immigrants, the Norwegian population was composed by the white Christian as most of its immigrants came from its Nordic neighbourhood (Mateus, 2016, p. 1). The homogeneity might be partly due to a relatively small number of immigrants who mostly came from the Nordic countries and were considered alike Norwegians; in terms of language, culture and lifestyle (Hagelund, 2003b, p. 49). Until 1980, despite the continued entry of immigrants, the population of Norway was entirely (99.5 percent) white (Aalberg et al., 2012, p. 100).

However, in the 1980s, the cultural homogeneity of the immigrant pool declined dramatically when Norway became a significant recipient of a new type of non-western immigrant such as refugees and asylum seekers (Aalberg et al., 2012). These were the mostly immigrants from the Middle East, North Africa and Asia. The Norwegian public reaffirmed its support for restricting immigration in the 1980s. While the number of asylum-seekers arriving in Norway was negligible throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, never exceeding 300 a year, it increased dramatically and peaked to 8,600 arrivals in 1987 (Cooper, 2005; Hagelund, 2003b, p. 50).

This enormously increased public concern and outrage over immigration issues, and there were several public anti-immigration manifestations (Hagelund, 2002, p. 405). 'Immigration was politicized, in the sense that it started to matter for how people voted' (Hagelund, 2002, p. 405). The electoral support for the anti-immigration Progress Party can be interpreted as confirming xenophobic tendencies of the Norwegian population at the time; it had only presences of 3.7 percent in the parliament in 1985 but respectively increased to 12.3 percent in 1987, and to 13.0 percent in 1989 (Cooper, 2005). During the 1990s, the party increasingly propagated integration

policy more like what is normally termed assimilation, emphasizing immigrants' one-sided responsibility to adapt to Norwegian ways and values (Hagelund, 2002, p. 405).

In Norway, the highest percentage of immigrants is from Muslim countries. Meanwhile, maintaining multiculturalism and assisting ethnic minorities in integrating into Norwegian society has become one of the biggest challenges for modern Norway (Eriksen, 2013). On 22 July 2011, Anders Behring Breivik's terrorist acts in Oslo and Utøya left 77 victims dead (Jakobsson & Blom, 2014). Breivik was a Norwegian right-wing extremist with an anti-Islamic, anti-immigration agenda. He was against multiculturalism in Norway and regarded Islam as an enemy; and wanted deportation of all Muslims from Europe (Andersson, 2012). The attack, known in Norway simply as '22 July', made a deep impression on the fabric of Norwegian society (Kolås, 2017).

Scholars claim that that the 'Breivik attack' revealed the dimension of Norwegian society (Eriksen, 2013; Jakobsson & Blom, 2014). Much research done in the aftermath of the attack claims that the incident has envisaged a new and more positive debate on multicultural society in Norway (Andersson, 2012). For instance, using data gathered around the time of the 2011 terror attacks in Norway, Jakobsson & Blom, (2014) evaluate that 'attitudes toward immigrants became more positive in the wake of a terror attack by a Norwegian Islamophobic extremist focusing on anti-immigration'.

Accordingly, Eriksen argued that in comparison with the 1990s, the language in the debate on immigrants and multiculturalism in Norway has become more aggressive in the aftermath of 'Breivik attack' (quoted in Andersson, 2012). He explicitly mentioned that the tagging of people known for their pro-immigration and pro-diversity attitude has switched from terms such as 'politically correct' and 'naïve' to 'quislings' and 'traitors'. He claims that after the 22 July 2011 tragedy, there have been signs of a more aggressive debate but there have also been signs of more public attention to hate speech, Islamophobia and racism. Besides, Muslims living in Norway both received more positive attention and felt more included in the Norwegian 'we' in the days after the incident. Contrasting to the typical Western focus on Islamic terrorism that inclines to pinpoint problems outside the National imagination, Norwegian seem to understand the incident of 22 July as a homegrown, which requires national introspection (Andersson, 2012).

Likewise, a government survey in 2012 showed that 55percent of Norwegians are positive towards immigration while 45percent are somewhat negative to admitting more migrants to the country. A clear majority believes that newcomers make positive contributions to city life and

the labour market and agree that there should be equal opportunities for all. These findings signify a positive attitudinal change after the terror attack of 22 July 2011 (Skodvin & Wood, 2018, p. 89).

Besides, the Research Department of Unit for Social and Demographic Research has continuously done a yearly survey on '*Attitudes towards immigrants and immigration*'. The main purpose of the statistics is to map the attitudes of the Norwegian population on different aspects of the immigration and integration policy and towards immigrants as a group (SSB, 2018b). The recent survey was conducted between 3 July and 16 August 2017 (SSB, 2017). According to figures, 16 percent now think that it should be easier for refugees and asylum seekers to obtain a residence permit in Norway. While, fifty-two percent think that the access to residence permits should remain the same and 28 percent think it should be more difficult (SSB, 2017).

Nevertheless, attitudes towards immigrants fluctuate according to contextual influences. Contact with immigrant's and educational level appears to be most strongly related to all the attitude indicators. A wide range of contacts and a higher education tend to go together with liberal attitudes whereas, geographical region, gender and age only seem to impact on some of the attitude indicators. In comparison to men, women seem more susceptible to support the idea that immigrants enrich the Norwegian culture. They strongly deny than men that immigrants should be as alike Norwegians as possible (SSB, 2017).

Whereas age matters, generally the youngest members of the population were those who maintain the most immigrant-friendly viewpoints. In terms of region, people living in Agder/Rogaland are among those who are most sceptical to whether immigrants should have access to jobs on equal terms with Norwegians (SSB, 2017).

However, the statistic shows insignificant changes in questions about social welfare and culture. The statistically significant changes were 78 percent claim to have contact with immigrants, in 2017, a return to the level of 2015 after a drop to 72 percent in 2016. Similarly, those who would dislike having an immigrant as a neighbour also fell from 6 to 4 percent, the same share as in 2015 (SSB, 2017). Without any significant differences from that of 2016, 25 percent and 68 percent agree respectively on the statement that '*most immigrants abuse the social welfare system*' and that '*most immigrants enrich the cultural life in Norway*' (SSB, 2017).

Likewise, the same is true for the proportion that would feel uncomfortable about having an immigrant as a son-in-law or a daughter-in-law (20 percent) and the proportion agreeing that

immigrants should attempt to become as similar to Norwegians as possible (50 percent) (SSB, 2017). On the whole, the figures depict that the attitudes towards immigrants have developed somewhat more positively over the years (SSB, 2017). See figure:

Table 1: Answers to three questions in relation to immigrants in Percent

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Would you feel uncomfortable if you or someone in your closest family had an immigrant as a home help?'										
Yes	10	7	7	7	9	8	8	7	7	6
No	90	92	91	92	90	91	90	91	92	93
Don't know	1	1	2	1	1	1	3	2	1	1
Would you feel uncomfortable if your new neighbour was an immigrant?'										
Yes	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	4	6	4
No	94	93	92	92	92	92	92	94	92	95
Don't know	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1
Would you feel uncomfortable if you had a son or daughter that wanted to marry an immigrant?'										
Yes	24	25	26	25	25	25	23	17	20	20
No	69	70	67	70	69	69	69	76	74	75
Don't know	6	5	7	5	6	6	8	7	6	5
Source: Statistics Norway										

2.7 Summing up

In this chapter, I illustrated Nepal as a traditionally diverse country. Besides diversity, the socio-cultural harmony among different ethnic groups is a unique characteristic of the Nepalese society. In term of emigration, the international migration of Nepalese people has accelerated rapidly in the last two decades. In contrast, from a country prone to emigration during the 1940s, Norway became an average receiving country during the 1990s. In addition, there is a rapid

influx of refugee and asylum seekers in recent years. Simultaneously, due to the arrival of immigrants with diversified backgrounds, the previously homogenous Norwegian society is slowly changing into a heterogeneous society.

Consequently, the Norwegian integration policy's directions and forms have changed over time as they are aiming for a multicultural Norway. Recently, the basic foundation of the Norwegian integration policy is equality, solidarity, freedom and inclusion of settled immigrants into the Norwegian society. Significantly, as depicted in some of the research mentioned above, it can be summarised that Norwegian attitude towards immigrants is progressively positive. After this contextual understanding, I will present the conceptual foundation for this thesis in the upcoming chapter.

3 Conceptual Framework

It is equally important to understand the core concept of immigrant integration to understand this research. Though there are various approaches to examine integration, this chapter is concentrated on the key theoretical concepts predominantly employed in this research. I will present my understanding of integration in the first part of this chapter. In the second part, I will focus on theories of social integration. Next, I will explain the foundation for the conceptual framework used in this research. This section will delve into the four-interconnected dimensions of social integration. Simultaneously, I will introduce an integration indicator (Employment, Norwegian language proficiency, social connection and sense of belongingness) in each of the dimension. Followingly, I will talk about the basic concept of gender and how I am using it in my research. Finally, I will explain how the theory is operationalized and applied in the research.

3.1 Understanding integration

Integration refers to the process of settlement, interaction with the host society, and social change that follows immigration (Penninx & Garcés-Mascreñas, 2016, p. 11). The process begins with the arrival of the immigrants and ends when they are equal as the natives (Phillimore & Goodson, 2008, p. 309). However, to acquire such status of an equal membership in the society, they must '*secure a place*' for themselves in many literal tasks such as; must find a house, get a work and income, find schools for their kids and have access to health facilities. Further, they must find a position in a social and cultural sphere; they have to build connections and interact with other groups and individuals in the society, recognise and use institutions of the host society, become recognised and accepted in their cultural specificity (Penninx & Garcés-Mascreñas, 2016, p. 11).

Undeniably, integration is a two-way process where not only the immigrants are affected but also the immigrant-receiving society (Ager & Strang, 2008). The flow of immigrants influences the demographic size of the host society along with its sociocultural composition and to deal with the immigrants' social, cultural and political requirements new institutional arrangements are introduced (Davidov & Semyonov, 2017; Entzinger & Biezeveld, 2003; Van Mol & De Valk, 2016)

There is a long history of scientific study on settlement process of newcomers in a host society. These studies have been based on s based on various concepts and perspectives. In the early

twentieth century majority of the scholars viewed that eventually, all immigrants would assimilate to their new environment. Besides, some of them used the metaphor of the '*melting pot*' and suggest that the assimilation process occurs when all the parties involved would abandon certain elements of their culture and identity, and retain others, that would then merge with elements of other immigrant and non-immigrant cultures. As a consequence, an entirely new culture would develop. Whereas, other considered assimilation to be more one-sided process which would occur in phases and claimed that fundamentally at the end there will be "*no significant differences between the newcomers and their offspring and the established society would persist, neither in their social situation nor in their cultural orientation*" (Entzinger & Biezeveld, 2003, p. 7).

Likewise, another significant variation in the study of immigrant's integration has to do with the subject of study i.e. use of different target groups. Some researchers have concentrated primarily on the newcomers focusing on their behavioural changes while the others have focused on the perception and attitude of the host society towards the immigrants. In addition, immigrant's integration has been studied within different dimensions of the settlement process such as, some researchers have concentrated in the political and legal dimension to become a part of the host society (such as; voting rights and citizenships), while some of the researchers have examined the socio-economic dimension (such as; immigrants' access to education, labour market, health care and so on) or the cultural-religious aspects (Penninx & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2016).

However, all of "*these approaches and the concept of integration are highly contested within the academic literature*" (Penninx & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2016, p. 13; Phillimore & Goodson, 2008, p. 309) yet it continues to be central in many studies and academic debates on the settlement of newcomers in host societies (Alba & Foner, 2015; Dancygier & Laitin, 2014; Sobolewska et al., 2017). Numerous scholars have worked hard to strip the concept of its normative character and build a more open and analytical definition.

David Lockwood viewed integration through two different lenses namely, the system and social integration. According to him, system integration is mostly an anonymous form of integration that occurs through institutions and organisations, via the state, the legal system, markets, corporate actors or finance. In contrast, social integration refers to the inclusion of individuals in a system, the conscious and motivated interaction, cooperation of individual actors and groups, creating mutual relationships among individuals and their attitudes towards the social system (Lockwood, 1964). Similarly, for Marshall (1995) social integration refers to the

principles by which individuals or actors are related to one another in a society while system integration refers to the relationship between parts of a society or social system (Marshall, 1995, p. 488).

However, Berry (1997) opines that integration of immigrants occurs when being able to maintain the culture of origin while participating in everyday activities with the society. For, Valtonen (2004) integration is the ability to participate fully in economic, social, cultural and political activities, without having to relinquish one's own distinct ethnocultural identity and culture and is "*at the same time a process by which settling persons become part of the social, institutional and cultural fabric of a society*" (Valtonen, 2004, p. 74).

Meanwhile, based on Favell (2001), Platts-Fowler and Robinson (2015), understand integration as a set of overlapping processes operating within different spheres, which can proceed at different velocities, along with variable trajectories, and with distinct outcomes (Platts-Fowler & Robinson, 2015, p. 479). Likewise, for Heckmann (2005) integration is "*a generation's lasting process of inclusion and acceptance of migrants in the core institutions, relations and statuses of the receiving society*" (Heckmann, 2005, p. 18). In summary, integration is "*the process of becoming an accepted part of society*" (Penninx & Garcés-Masareñas, 2016, p. 14).

Interestingly, all these approaches have in common; the assumption that immigrants are partially engaged in various autonomous and interdependent fields or systems with the host society. Undeniably, integration is a multi-dimensional process in which individuals, society and the state have a role (EC, 2011; Mestheneos & Ioannidi, 2002, p. 306; Schibel, Fazel, Robb, & Garner, 2002). Thus, integration cannot be fully understood without exploring the full range of factors involved and their interconnections as well as the factors which can impact negatively on the process' (Phillimore & Goodson, 2008, p. 309).

In conclusion, it is evident that the concept of integration is "*individualized, contested and contextual*" (Robinson, 1998, cited by Ager & Strang, 2008, p.16). Within these diverse concepts, Bosswick & Heckmann, (2006, p.3) opine that integration of immigrants into a host society should be understood as a special case of social integration. Further, they classify social integration within four dimensions; structural integration, cultural integration, interactive integration, and identification. I will explain their concepts in detail in the upcoming section.

3.2 Social integration

Ferguson (2008) defines social integration as “*a process of promoting the values, relations and institutions that empower all people to participate in the social, economic and political life on the basis of equality of rights, equity and dignity*” (Ferguson, 2008, p. 6). Besides, he clearly states that the understanding of social integration should exclude the methods of integration ‘*based on force*’ or attempts to ‘*impose unitary identities*’ on reluctant populations. Further, he has identified major areas where the attention is required for the promotion of social integration. Though these are different areas, they are somehow connected processes that outline the extent to which people are able to live and work together on an equal basis.

The first process is the ‘*recognition*’ of diverse social groups, their identity and culture in order to promote respect, dignity and co-operation (ibid). The second is ‘*representation*’ of their political voice to ensure that the interests of different groups are equally considered in decision-making and distribution of the resource. Likewise, the third is ‘*redistribution*’ of socio-economic resources between individuals and groups to avoid profound disparities and fragmentation on the basis of wealth, ethnicity, region, gender, age or another social identity (ibid).

Furthermore, the division for social integration in the UNDSPD-DESA (a UN agency) envisions an inclusive society equipped with mechanisms “*to accommodate diversity and facilitate/enable people’s active participation in their political, economic and social lives*” (UNDSPD-DESA, 2018). In addition, such integration ‘ensures equal opportunities to all the people enabling them to achieve full potential in life, regardless of their origin and ultimately, over-rides differences of geography, generation, class and gender. It adds, that such society nurtures, at the same time, “*emanates from the well-being of each individual, mutual trust, sense of belonging and inter-connectedness*” (ibid).

Whereas, Bosswick & Heckmann, (2006, p.11) define; social integration as a generation’s lasting process of inclusion and acceptance of immigrants into the core institutions, positions and status of the host society. It is an interactive process, between immigrants and the host society. For immigrants, integration is a process of learning a new culture, getting rights and obligations, accessing social status and positions, building personal relationships with members of the host society, which eventually formulates feeling of belongingness and identification with the host society. Whereas, for the host society, integration refers to welcoming and adapting to immigrants’ need and provide equal opportunities to immigrants in these institutions. In this interaction, however, the host society has much more power and prestige.

3.3 Foundation for the conceptual framework

This study aims to examine the limiting and enabling factors of social integration of Nepalese immigrants in Norway. As social integration is a diverse concept, the conceptual framework of this study is primarily based on Heckmann, F. (2005) “*Integration and integration policies: IMISCOE network feasibility study*” and Ager and Strang, (2008), “*Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework*”.

The feasibility study provides a conceptual framework to understand and research on immigrant integration processes. It analysed basic dimensions of social integration and suggests a conceptual basis for analysing determinants of integration processes. Whereas, Ager and Strang (2008) developed a coherent framework for investigating the dynamic and multifaceted integration of refugees in the UK. This framework brings multiple dimensions of social integration together in an analytical framework. The framework has four major facilitators multifaceted within ten indicators to examine integration. These domains hold on the eight policy-areas³ included in Migrant-Integration-Policy-Index (MIPEX), applied by the EU states to measure integration. However, I will be using only four out of ten integration indicators in this research. I chose these frameworks not only for their ability to reflect but also because of their commonalities in understandings of what ‘successful’ integration is. Besides, both are recognized well by the European-Union (EU) member-states.

Heckmann (2005) explained that social integration should be understood within four-interconnected dimensions i.e., Structural, cultural, interactive and identification and one cannot be achieved in the absence of another. Thus, the study of one dimension is not possible without the study of another (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2006; Heckmann, 2005; Heckmann & Schnapper, 2003). Whereas, the interlink between the four-dimensions of social integration can be illustrated as:

³ Political participation, health, education, family-reunion, education, labour-market mobility, anti-discrimination

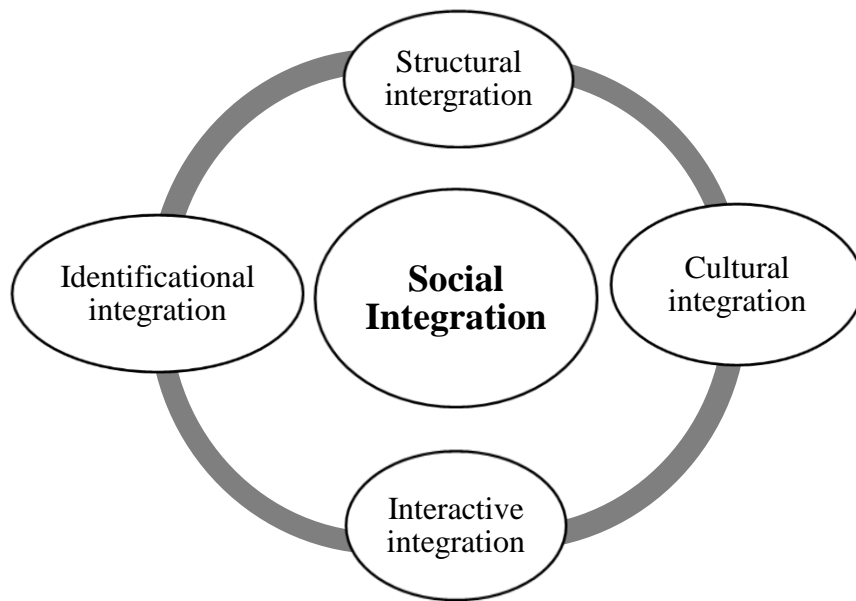


Figure 1: Four dimensions of social integration

In the section below, I will explain these four-dimensions of social integration in a nutshell. Along with each of this dimension, I will explain a relevant integration indicator derived and influenced from the analytical framework of Ager and Strang (2008). These indicators are the mechanism to examine the enabling and challenging factors of social integration of Nepalese immigrants in this thesis.

3.3.1 Structural integration

Structural integration refers to *“the acquisition of rights and the access to position and status in the core institutions of the host society”* (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2006, p. 9). Their access, representation and meaningful participation in these core institutions such as; legal system, economy and labour market, education and qualification systems, housing system, welfare state institutions (including health system), and full political citizenship determines their socioeconomic status and the opportunities and resources available to them (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2006, p. 9; Heckmann, 2005).

The level of collectively, coherence, and inclusivity of a society’s social relations of all dimensions determine the level of social integration. Besides, integration level differs with the differences in social rules, shared values, organizational forms, welfare distribution that shape individual’s activities in society (De Alcántara, 1995; Kısar Koramaz, 2014, p. 50).

Employment

Ager and Strang (2008) consider employment as one of the means to support positive integration. Employment has consistently been identified as an influential factor for; promoting economic independence, future planning, interaction with members of the host society, opportunities to develop language skills, restore self-esteem and encourage self-reliance (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 170). The main and frequent issues associated with employment of immigrants are non-cognition of qualification, low-paid and unstable employment (Phillimore and Goodson, 2008). Therefore, vocational training and further education aimed at immigrants in host countries are considered to foster employability and help immigrants to find a place in their new society.

3.3.2 Cultural integration

It is impossible to participate in society's core institutions without having cultural competencies on how those institutions function. Immigrants can claim rights, assume positions and have status in their new society only after acquiring core elements and competencies of the culture and society they are migrating to. Cultural integration refers to processes and states of an individual's cognitive, behavioural and attitudinal change which are a precondition for socialization and promote participation and integration (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2006).

Furthermore, cultural integration is an interactive, mutual process. On one hand, it is concerned with the immigrants and their children adjust to the host society's cultures and on the other hand, it stresses on the host society, which must also embrace changes and learn new ways of relating to immigrants and adapting to their needs (Heckmann, 2005, p. 16). The immigrants don't give up their cultural elements of the home country rather, bicultural competencies and personalities are assets for both the individual and the host society (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2006, p. 10).

Language

Language is a significant 'cultural competence' needed to integrate into a new society. Language plays a specific role in social interaction. One must agree that it is a crucial challenge for 'two-way' communication and cultural understanding for the host and the immigrant communities (Ager & Strang, 2008). Besides, language and cultural knowledge are also linked with power (Clegg, 1989). It is evident that lack of dominant language proficiency not only

compromises access to better economic opportunities and social resources but also hinders immigrants from participating in the power structure of the host society (Dustmann & Fabbri, 2003; Shields & Price, 2002). Immigrant workers who master the local language have greater access to a range of formal and informal communication channels, promoting their social bonding across the organization (Vaara, Tienari, Piekkari, & Sääntti, 2005). However, individuals having weak local language competence repeatedly find themselves isolated from information networks and decision-making processes (Marschan-Piekkari, Welch, & Welch, 1999).

3.3.3 Interactive integration

Interactive integration means the “*acceptance and inclusion of immigrants into the primary relationships and social networks of the host society*” (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2006, p. 10). It is essential to understand the attributes of social ties, relations and networks in society and how they function to evaluate integration at the interactive dimension (Kısar Koramaz, 2014, p. 50). Certain core elements of cultural integration, particularly ‘*communicative competences*’, are preconditions for interactive integration (Heckmann, 2005, p. 17).

Besides, interactive integration is indicated through people’s private or primary group interaction, such as; friendship, partnerships, marriage, networks and ties with natives’ membership in voluntary organizations. Initially, association and interaction within own ethnic cluster in the social system might be a help to immigrants but in long run, it may be detrimental. The immigrant might not be able to create/develop links with the host society. Being bound within own ethnic cluster can make it difficult for the immigrant in acquiring cultural and social capital necessary for competing in core institutions of the immigration country (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2006).

Social Connections

Immigrant’s social capital is considered to have effects in every aspect of their immigration process, from the decision to migrate to the actual settlement experiences (George & Chaze, 2009, p. 397). Ager & Strang, (2008) widely adopted concepts of social capital from Putnam (2000) in their framework to outline component of social connection; social ‘links’ ‘bonds’ and ‘bridges’. Social links are connections between immigrant and the structures of the states. Social bonds refer to social networks or the linkages among members of a society (McNeill,

Kreuter, & Subramanian, 2006; Schwarzer, Hahn, & Schröder, 1994) within social proximity such as; family, like-ethnic groups, community organisations which are adjacent in sharing material and information and are sources of emotional support, self-esteem and confidence (Atfield et al., 2007 as cited in Strang & Ager, 2010, p. 597) and '*maintaining cultural integrity*' (Berry, 1997; Phillimore & Goodson, 2008, p. 312). Likewise, social bridges are associated with participation and inclusion in the host community such as; shared participation in work, sports, religious or political activities. They may be on ordinary talks to substantial trust-based relationships or friendships. Social support, attachment, communication and shared values are among the functions served by social networks (Campbell & Lee, 1992; Mitchell & Trickett, 1980).

3.3.4 Identification integration

In the past, identification integration was only understood as a gradual replacement of minority's ethnic identity by the ethnic identity of the majority group. However, the recent identity studies are more concerned with various aspects of identification. Accordingly, instead of concentrating mainly on the ethnic identity decline, retention or replacement by the national identity of a host country, immigrants' and their descendants' identity is increasingly approached as a multidimensional concept (Nimmerfeldt, 2009, p. 28).

Such as, for Heckmann and his colleagues' identification integration refers to the stage when an immigrant reaches a sense of belonging to, groups in the host society, particularly in ethnic, local, regional and/or national terms' (Bosswick & Heckman 2006, p. 9). At the conceptual level, the emphasis is not on the construction of ethnic-cultural identity but is on the formation of a sense of belonging that could be associated to different groups in society. In other words, identification integration indicates the identification of an actor with a social system; by which he sees himself as an element of a collective body (Heckmann, 2005). Identification has cognitive and emotional sides; sprouts from the feeling of belongingness and results in a 'we - feeling' towards a group or collective (Heckmann, 2005, p. 9).

Undeniably, integration is a learning process and learning takes time for both the migrants and the receiving society. Inclusion in a new society is seen through the subjective membership in a host society, indicated by the formation of feelings of belonging to, and identification with different groups in society particularly in forms of ethnic, regional, local and/or national groups

or in sophisticated combinations of these (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2006; Heckmann, 2005, p. 17; Heckmann & Schnapper, 2003).

Sense of Belongingness

The feeling of belonging develops progressively with inclusion, participation and acceptance of immigrants in core institutions of the society (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2006). According to Heckmann (2005), the feeling of belongingness mostly develops during the latter part of the integration process. Ager and Strang (2008) argue in the most basic level, not only absences of conflict and ‘*toleration*’ but also the active ‘*mixing*’ of people from different groups reflect integration. This involved family links, committed friendship, a sense of respect and shared values. Besides, such shared values do not deny diversity, difference and one’s identity within a group, but provide a wider context within which people had a sense of belonging (Ager & Strang, 2008, pp. 177-178).

3.4 Define gender

The theoretical understanding of gender has been dynamic in the past decades (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2016). Sex is a biological difference while, gender is socially constructed differences between male and female in a society (Nicholson, 1994; Richardson, 2015, p. 3), that influence men’s and women’s roles, entitlements, access to resources and thus their gender needs (Walker, Frediani, & Trani, 2013). Gender is constructed in a society when a specific set of behaviours and norms are assigned differently to male and female with the presumption that male is strong/powerful, and female is weak/venerable. In Butler’s words, “*gender is the mechanism by which notions of masculinity and femininity are produced and naturalized*” (Butler, 2004, p. 42). Gradually, gender roles create unacceptable social relations, asymmetrical status, unfair treatment, unequal power and disappointing wellbeing between male and female in the society.

Meanwhile, there is an increasing consensus among scholars that gender is not just an identity, or a role dictated and practised in family relations. Moreover, it is an institutionalized system of social practices for constituting people as two significantly different categories, men and women, and shaping social relation of inequality based on that difference (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004, p. 510).

3.4.1 Doing gender

In Anthias and Pajnik opinion; gender should be fundamental to the understanding of integration processes (Anthias & Pajnik, 2014). Immigration and integration policies have gendered impacts (EC, 2011; Geddes & Scholten, 2015) and gendered constructions appear the main issue in the integration discourse as women are key sites for the construction of community identities and the opportunity structures such as the labour market is influenced by gender (Spencer & Charsley, 2016, p. 11).

Migrant men and women's migration experiences differ (Curran & Saguy, 2001, p. 58), often face differing expectations, opportunities, constraints and vulnerabilities in integration processes. Migration of a woman may enhance autonomy and prestige but also social isolation. While, the dependency of migrant females on their family members may be a barrier to their social interaction and labour market participation, leaving very little room for developing their own social networks (Charsley & Liversage, 2015). In this Qualitative research, I am not doing a statistical comparative study between man and women. However, I intend to highlight gender perspectives in each of the dimensions of social integration.

3.5 Operationalising theory

In this study, social integration is operationalized and analysed through four dimensions; Structural, cultural, interactive and identification as categorised by Heckmann, F. (2005). Each of these dimensions will be examined with four relevant integration indicators derived and influenced by the analytical framework of Ager and Strang (2008). At first, I will examine the understanding of social integration among my informants and participants. Second, I will examine the structural dimensions of social integration with the help of employment as an indicator. Third, I will examine the cultural dimensions with language proficiency as an indicator. Forth, I will examine the interactive dimension by looking at the social connections of the informants. Additionally, I will examine the identification dimension with 'the sense of belonging' as an indicator. In a nutshell, the theory is operationalized and applied to the research as illustrated in the figure:

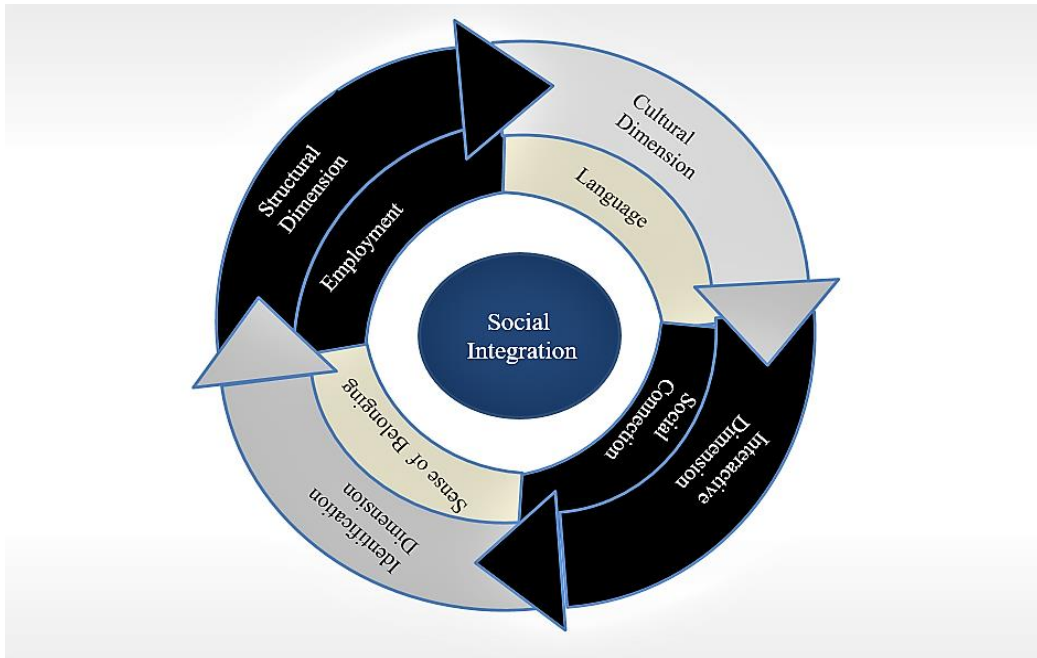


Figure 2: Operationalising theory

4 Research Methodology

This chapter gives an overview of the methodological choice and the empirical techniques, applied during the process of this study. A methodology is an overall framework of choices in planning, collecting, analysing, and interpreting data in the specific research we conduct (Silverman, 2005, pp. 99-112). In this chapter, I will describe the entire research process starting from planning my fieldwork; conducting life history interviews, focus group discussion; data collection, interpretations and data analysis and dissemination of my findings. I will also explain ethical considerations and possible limitations of this study.

4.1 Qualitative Methodology

This research aims to examine the limiting and enabling factors of social integration of the Nepalese immigrant in Norway. I find qualitative research methodology most appropriate as it uses a naturalistic approach to understand contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Patton, 2001, p. 39). Likewise, this research intends to evaluate various dimensions and indicators of social integration within a 'particular group' (Nepalese immigrants) in Norway and thus, demands an in-depth understanding of a research informant's social life. I am going to evaluate integration indicators such as; employment, Norwegian language skills, social interactions and belongingness, which are intangible elements. Undeniably, qualitative methodology is most applicable to examine intangible figures which are impossible to measure quantitatively (Creswell, 2014).

Besides, it is not necessary that all immigrants have the same life histories and experiences. Also, they may have different opinions and understanding of limiting and enabling factors of social integration. The larger perspective of my analysis is based on their responses. In the meantime, Alan Bryman (2008) argues that qualitative methodology helps facilitate a researcher to understand the interpretation of the issue from the research participants' perspectives (Alan, 2008, p. 366).

4.1.1 Life history interviews

Life history interviewing is a research method designed to record an individual's biography in his or her own words (Jackson & Russell, 2010, p. 2). It helps in accessing people's narrative accounts of their lives, individual's description of events, reminiscence, feelings, attitudes in a

board context. It acts as a vehicle for investigating links between personal and collective identities, a means of understanding patterns of change within living memory. According to Jackson & Russell (2010, p. 20) “*geographers use life history interviews to investigate the dialogical relationship between past and present; as past events are viewed through the lens of the present and where present-day concerns shape what is remembered and forgotten from the past*”. Hence, in short, “*life history interviews focus on thinking through the active links between past, present and future geographies*” (Jackson & Russell, 2010, p. 20).

Altogether 16 life history interviews were conducted for this research from September 2017 to November 2017. I used open-ended questions in my interviews as open-ended questions are used to give informants opportunities to provide their own answers. Such questions are usually asked when rich information is required (Babbie, 2004, p. 245). Open-ended questions also helped me to collect detailed information regarding informant’s narratives on their journey to Norway and their day to day experiences while living in Norway.

The open-ended questions focused mainly on three issues. The first set of questions dealt with informants’ basic information, while in the second part it revolved around their immigration and their understanding of social integration. In addition, it aimed for an in-depth understanding of their experiences with employment, their social connections, their challenges and supports in integration into Norwegian society, their perceptions on their position in the Norwegian society, their long-term plans in Norway and so on. The third part dealt with the influences of age, educational level and immigration status in their social integration in Norway. Meanwhile, I encouraged them to share their understanding of the integration process, their cultural encounters, their expectations and views for a better integration process. Especially, their life events and the meaning they assign to those events; which they consider significant in their social integration were the highlights in the interviews.

Each interview lasted for more than two hours. Generally, a single visit was not enough to extract the required information for this research. With most informants, initial few meetings, and telephone calls were devoted to building a rapport so that they were comfortable during interviews. Besides, four of these life history interviews were finished with the help of Skype. As mentioned earlier, four of my informants are from Alta and I meet them face to face during their vacation in Oslo. Unfortunately, time was limited to have a complete life history interview in Oslo, thus, as a solution, they offered to skype and continue the interview once they return to Alta. However, all the interviews, including the skype interviews, were scheduled according to the convenient day and time for the informants.

4.1.1.1 Research site and access to informants

At first, I got approval to conduct my research from the Data Protection Official at the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD). In this research, interviewees were from Trondheim, Oslo and Alta. Initially, I took help of some mutual friends to identify and access potential research informants. As Limputtong opines that approaching research informants through the people in the community whom they already know and trust, increases the level of trust in the researcher who may appear to a stranger or a complete outsider to them (Limputtong, 2008, p. 9). In addition, I used snowballing strategy. Snowballing is a process where existing informants identify and refer another person to take part in a study (Denscombe, 2014, pp. 42,43). My first informants significantly contributed in identifying and approaching other informants for the study.

I followed informant's choice of location for the interviews, where they would be comfortable and uninterrupted. Interestingly, most female informants welcomed me to their house, while, most male informants chose to meet in open public places and cafés. As Aquilino (1993) argues, one of the difficulties in conducting individual interviews in the family home is to maintain confidentiality and privacy as the smaller amount of living space makes it more difficult for other family members to remain out of earshot during the interview (Aquilino, 1993, p. 368). Accordingly, at times a family member or family friend would interrupt the interview and start influencing my key informant. I had to reschedule the meeting again. Certainly, visiting their homes gave me an opportunity to have an insight into their living in Norway. In Contrast, most male informants seem to be accustomed to the public places and were comfortable to narrate their life histories and experiences even when someone nearby would seem watching us.

At first, some informants were very sceptical on 'integration' as a thesis theme and my interest in it. I had to first introduce myself in detail, not only as a master's student at the NTNU but also my backgrounds and experiences in Nepal. I ensured them about the confidentiality of the interviews and briefed on how the information will be used. Besides, the interviews were audiotaped only with their permission. This helped me to release the tension and build a mutual trust with the informants. Interview questions were originally written in English and subsequently translated into Nepali during the interviews. The interviews were then transcribed verbatim and translated back into English.

4.1.1.2 Overview of the informants

Life history interview was taken from a total of 16 informants, out of which 5 were male and 11 were females while the average age was 36.26 (SD±8.07). Majority of the informants were married. 7 of them had a refugee background, 7 of them are in family reunification visa and 2 of them are here as students. Some of them had changed their visa status as well i.e., some of the immigrants with a refugee background had obtained a Norwegian passport, who came to Norway as a student had working visa now and so no. In case of the educational level, 25.1 percent were just literate, 12.5 percent said to have attended secondary level of schooling while the informants with graduate and master's degree were at 50 percent and 12.5 percent respectively. The informants were from Oslo, Trondheim and Alta. The basic information of the informants is illustrated as:

Table 2 Basic information of the informants

Name	Age	Gender	Marital Status	Education	Norwegian language skill	Duration of living in years
Shyam Sharma	32	Male	Married	Master	Basic	5 yrs.
Dhan Bahadur Chohan	50	Male	Married	Literate	Strong	5 yrs.
Rajeeb Adhikari	31	Male	Married	Graduate	Strong	8 yrs.
Hari Bahadur	40	Male	Married	Literate	Strong	8 yrs.
Bhim Oli	45	Male	Married	Graduate	Strong	17 yrs.
Chhaya Rai	44	Female	Married	Literate	Basic	5 yrs.
Gita Pant	45	Female	Married	Graduate	Strong	10 yrs.
Sabita Rokka	21	Female	Unmarried	Graduate	Excellent	10 yrs.
Janani Adhikari	28	Female	Married	Graduate	Strong	5 yrs.
Dhana Gurung	33	Female	Married	Graduate	Strong	5 yrs.
Radha Chohan	39	Female	Married	Literate	Strong	3 yrs.
Dil Sara Gurung	38	Female	Married	Master	Basic	6 yrs.
Anita Ghimire	31	Female	Married	Graduate	Strong	3 yrs.
Karma Lama	40	Female	Married	Graduate	Basic	4 yrs.
Rubina Rai	24	Female	Married	Secondary	Excellent	5 yrs.
Pabitra Oli	38	Female	Married	Secondary	Strong	7 yrs.

4.1.2 Focus group discussion

A focus group discussion (FGD) is an informal discussion (Wilkinson, 2004), or a ‘*collective conversation*’, among a group of selected individuals arranged to examine a specific set of topics (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013, p. 1). Methodologically, a focus group discussion involves ‘a group of six to eight participants, purposefully and persistently selected based on a significant homogeneous characteristic, engage in a face-to-face discussion on a specific issue for one or two hours’ (Morgan, 1996; Ryan, Gandha, Culbertson, & Carlson, 2014, p. 329). By Homogeneity, it means that the participants have something in common related to the research question, that brings them together in the focus group discussion (Flick, 2014, pp. 197-198). In the context of this research, the homogeneous characteristics of the participants were that they all had similar backgrounds such as; all were recent immigrants in Norway from Nepal and their length of stay in Norway was less than three years.

Besides, Krueger suggests the use of ‘mini-focus groups’ with three or four participants to get more in-depth information (Kruger, 1994, p. 17). The participants comfortably express their opinions and have a dynamic discussion on a specific issue with the help of a moderator. However, focus groups do not aim to reach consensus on the discussed issues but rather “*encourage a range of responses which provide a greater understanding of the attitudes, behaviour, opinions or perceptions of participants on the research issues*” (Hennink, 2007, p. 6).

In this study, the focus group method was aimed to see how recent immigrants from Nepal discuss their experiences and understanding about social integration in Norway. Two focus group discussions were conducted with seven participants. The members were not repeated in any FGDs. Both the discussions were conducted in a normal coffee talk manner and were tape recorded with participants’ permission. I acted as a moderator in both the FGDs. First, I introduced my research topic and requested them to share their experience and understanding about social integration in Norway. Later, I tried to keep discussions more concentrated on the integration indicators I was focusing on my research. The discussions were primarily on what they understood by social integration, what they felt/thought about Norwegian society, how they felt being perceived by natives, their position in society, the extent to which they felt a sense of belonging, what role did language competency has in integration and how much did they currently participate in the core institutions.

4.1.2.1 Location of FGDs and access to participants

As a student at NTNU, it was easier for me to meet another Nepalese student at NTNU and their family in Trondheim. Besides, as all the participants were living in Moholt student village and its surroundings, it was easy for me to approach them and arrange the discussions. Therefore, both the FGDs were conducted in Moholt, Trondheim. Onwuegbuzie, Leech, & Collins, (2010, p.712), suggests that a focus group can be made up of people in the pre-existing group who are already familiar with each other. While none of my participants had participated in focus group discussion in the past, all were living in Moholt⁴, Trondheim and knew each other very well. This helped to create a comfortable environment for the participant to express their feelings and experiences. During discussions, they shared a few incidents relevant to the topic that some of them had observed or experienced together in the past. Besides, their multicultural experience of sharing their respective flat with other international and Norwegian students in the Moholt Student Village was the major highlight in both the FGDs.

4.1.2.2 overview of participants

The first group consisted of three members who were unmarried female immigrant students at the NTNU. They wished to extend their stay in Norway until possible. The while the second had four members, consisting of three male immigrant students at the NTNU and a spouse of one of the students who was in family reunification status. The age range of all the participants in the FGDs was 25-35 years. Three of them already hold a master's degree in Nepal and were pressuring their second masters in Norway. The duration of their living in Norway was less than 3 years while they all had weak Norwegian language skills.

4.2 Transcribing and Data analysis

The empirical data of this research was derived from the translated data and notes taken during the interviews and focus group discussions. A systematic coding and categorisation of the empirical data were done. In a qualitative research; *“a code refers to a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a salient, summative, essence-capturing and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data”* (Saldaña, 2015, p. 4). Coding facilitates organizing empirical data into different categories which then crystallises into themes for easy analytical work.

⁴ Moholt consist of Trondheim's largest student village and is renowned for a large, social and international student milieu

Besides, coding helps a researcher to familiarise with contents and initiates an analytical process and acts as '*a warming up process*' before the more detailed process begins (Saldaña, 2015, p. 18). Subsequently, existing theories were applied to read and review the empirical data and analyse emerging pattern and themes (Alan, 2008, pp. 542,554). During the preliminary thematic analysis, I could obtain richness of the empirical data collected as it covered most of the goals expected by the interview guide. Besides, it helped me to see the relevance of the theories I chose; and my approach to examine limiting and enabling factors of social integration.

4.3 Ethical Consideration

Before starting my fieldwork, I got my interview guide approved by the NSD. However, ethical concern raises an entire process of investigation in a research (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 83). There are mainly four types of ethical issues; harm to the participant, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy and deception (Diener & Crandall, 1978).

Maintaining the confidentiality and anonymity of the informants was one of the major ethical concern in this research. Confidentiality is related to an agreement with the participants about what will be done to the information that participants provided (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 94).

Before the scheduled interview dates, I made sure to notify informants that informants privacy will be protected. And assured that the information they provided will be used for this research only. "*Often it implies that private data identifying the participants should not be disclosed*" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 94) so pseudonyms was given to the informants to prevent them from being identified. As it is a researcher's responsibility to ensure '*do no harm*' to the studied population (Karnieli-Miller, Strier, & Pessach, 2009, p. 286), I ensured that my research does not harm to any of my informants; be it emotionally, legally, or any other form. Besides, their information was protected from the access of an authorised person. The information was permanently deleted after finishing the final report of this research.

Likewise, this research expected voluntary participation from the informants. Prior to each interview, I made sure that informants understood the research purpose and clarified their doubts regarding it when required. Besides, verbal consent was taken from each informant. However, informant's preferences were not overlooked. They had full control over the information they provide. Flexibility was given to the informant if they did not feel comfortable to answer any question or if wish to withdraw from the interview at any time. Also, the

interviews were audio recorded only with their permission. A verbal consent from the informant was taken before recording. Besides, some informants wanted to share specific incidents influencing their perceptions on the relevant issue but wanted it to be ‘off the record’. I respect their privacy and didn’t audio record those portions of the conversation.

Similarly, I explained to each of the informants about how the data was going to be used to avoid deception. During interviews and discussions, at times, I cross-questioned them to make sure I understood them correctly. Besides, I have tried my best to make an authentic translation of their replies from Nepali to English; keeping in mind that the essence of their words should not be lost in translation. Besides, in every point of data analysis, I was careful that informant’s views should be presented in a way that they don’t feel misrepresented or misquoted.

4.4 Research Challenges

The first challenge I encountered was to find the potential informants. Initially, I thought that being a Nepalese student in Norway and researching within the Nepalese community will be an advantage for me. Contrary to my expectation, I had to persuade a lot of people to be my informants. Besides, people were very happy in talking about enabling factors for integration but seemed reluctant to share their challenges as they felt that talking about challenges would mean complaining. Some of them were very confused about their feelings on integration. I convinced them that knowing their challenges will help me to depict actual integration perspectives of Nepalese immigrants in Norway. However, on their confusion, I decided to present their feelings as they were.

Likewise, I faced a huge challenge in scheduling appropriate time for the interview with some of the informants. During late September, they were busy in their personal and professional lives. I appreciate that most of them gave their weekend time for the interview. However, as we call something like Nepalese time, some informants rescheduled the meeting in last hour or came later than the scheduled time. Sadly, five of them never showed up even after committing for the interview. As my research is based on voluntary participation, I handled the issue by approaching more possible informants than targeted initially. I called them respectfully and reminded them of the appointment in advance. It was costly, yet I made a budget to cover that.

Besides, sometimes a single meeting of one/two hours was not enough for the informants to get the comfort level to share their emotional events and life experiences. Moreover, like Jackson & Russell (2010, p. 7) argue that “*the relationship between interviewer and interviewee builds*

up over a period and the trust that develops between them shapes the life history". In this situation, I pleaded for other meetings if possible and gave them time to open up. However, when there was an increased level of comfort in the conversation, most informants would go out of the track. Generally, I was a good listener, but at times I interrupted them and indirectly persuaded to come back to the actual topic of our conversation.

Another major problem was to find immigrants from a refugee background. I was very aware of the fact that, it would be rude to ask someone about their immigrant status particularly when they have a refugee background. Lucky, I encountered some of these people in Oslo who were there on vacation but lived primarily in Alta. On one hand, I was struggling to find my probable informants with refugee background in Oslo and on the other hand, some of these people from Alta showed huge enthusiasm in my research. Though I was not aiming to interview anyone from Alta initially, I decided to include them. They also agreed to share their life history. However, they had very calculated time in Oslo, they could not manage enough time for a face to face interview. Instead of influencing their vacation schedules, we did detail skype interviews later, when they returned to Alta.

4.5 Validity and Reliability

According to Patton (2001), a qualitative researcher should be concerned about validity and reliability factors in designing a study, analysing results and judging the quality of the study. The validity of research is concerned with accuracy and trustworthiness; while, reliability is concerned with replicability and consistency of the research findings (Golafshani, 2003; Seale, 1999, p. 266).

I tried to make the interview guide as systematic and as specific as possible; in a way that it facilitated informants to tell their life history and perceptions of integration in a coherent way. Besides, I shared a draft of my interview guide with my supervisor, some of my friends and one of the probable informants. I incorporated their suggestions and edited the interview guide until it captured the essence of the research topic.

Similarly, the misinterpretation of meanings expressed through interview conversation is one of the main threat to ensure qualitative validity (Baxter & Eyles, 1997, p. 509). I repeatedly listened to audio records of interviews and focus group discussions before transcribing and translating them into textual data for analysis with full honesty. Besides, during my data analysis, I checked the recordings and matched them with the notes taken during the interviews

and the focus group discussions. It helped me to visualise informants' life events/experiences that they considered significant in building up their perceptions regarding their integration.

4.6 Limitations

As it is idealistic to measure a fully-accomplished process of integration, my study is limited to examine enabling and limiting factors of social integration. Even though integration is a two-way process, my research focuses only on immigrants but lacks the perspectives from the receiving society. Besides, only four out of ten indicators of integration identified by Ager and Strange (2008) have been studied in this research which may not be enough to see overall perspectives.

The choice of my research site was based on accessibility and participant availability; including more places would have required significantly more resources and time. Thus, I don't deny the possibility that crucial sources may have been missed. Besides, this research studies the social integration of a specific community within Norway. While, I made sure that there is variation in informant's key characteristics, including their age, education, marital status and immigrant's status, their number was still limited to making it a small-scale research. As the research was conducted based on very few interviews and participants, I do not claim for generalisation as *"it often impossible to generalise the findings of a research done in very small scale in a certain locality"* (Bryman 2008, p. 391).

5 Research Findings

This chapter presents the findings from the empirical data. The empirical data were derived from the sixteen life history interviews and two focus group discussions (FGDs). First, I present the Nepalese immigrants understanding of social integration. Second, I present the findings within each dimension of social integration. The major highlights of the findings are followed by some interesting quotations from the informants and participants. These quotations give an elaborated prospect to the basis of which the findings were derived. However, as these dimensions of social integration are inter-connected, the findings are frequently related and sometimes overlapping within different dimensions.

I am using the term ‘informants’ for the those who gave me their life history interviews and the term ‘participants’ to those who participated in the focus group discussions (FGDs). Whereas, the term ‘immigrants’ donates both. Besides, I have given them pseudonyms to protect their identity.

5.1 Informant’s Understanding of Integration

In this section, I will present the major findings in the understanding of social integration among the immigrants. The findings will be analysed and discussed in the next chapter. Precisely, these findings are expected to address my first research question; *How do Nepalese immigrant understand social integration in Norway?*

Before going deep into life history interviews and FGDs, I wanted to know immigrant’s understanding of ‘*what is a social integration*’. As an interviewer and moderator, I began the interviews and discussions by explaining my topic and requesting them to share anything they know about ‘integration’. The immigrants explained their understanding of social integration with phrases such as; *a long-term process.... an acceptance of cultural diversity by the host society; natives and immigrants rejoicing similar festivals; mutual celebrations; equal status between the immigrants and the natives; adopting to Norwegian dressing style, popular sports in the country; following social values and religion of the host society; getting used to with the Norwegian culture; adopting Norwegian social norms and mixing up with the Norwegians, behaving like a Norwegians, gaining language competency, attachment with culture history, heritage and in the local politics and so on.*

Some of the interesting quotes from the immigrants are as follows:

Radha was introduced to the word 'integration' in the introductory class she attended in the beginning year of her arrival in Norway. She said; *'As a refugee in Norway, we learn a lot about how to integrate into Norwegian society. From the introductory course, I learned that integration means living in the society without being a burden for the society and being equally responsible for society's welfare'*.

Similarly, another informant with a refugee background, Chaya said; *'As we came here for settlement, it's our home now, even though, the society is different, we are aware that we have to try our best to be a part of this society that also as soon as possible. Therefore, we are doing whatever it requires being a good citizen'*.

Interestingly, Shyam, the immigrants who did his master's in Norway in International Relations said that social integration for him is *'that stage of his life when he will feel no differences to another Norwegian. He explains 'I will consider myself integrated into Norwegian society when I feel a kind of belongingness and strong attachment to the place, people and culture here.'*

Similarly, Bhim Oli, who has been staying in Norway since last 17 years, said that *'I think it refers to a good relationship with the people and social institutions of the society you live in. In my context, I try to be friends and behave equally with whoever is in my workplace and locality be it be a Norwegian or another immigrant like me'*. He further added that *'I enjoy in a multicultural environment so do some Norwegians. My Norwegian friends are so interested in our food and culture, they are so happy to participate in our festival celebration. I think their acceptance of our culture is also integration.'*

Another informant Dhana understands integration as referring to *'getting used to'* with Norwegian culture and adopting it. Whereas, for Rajeeb *'integration is a gradual process of mixing and blending with the characteristics of the host country.'* He said that *'though, I took years to start working out, I feel I am slowly adopting the Norwegian culture of doing training regularly (refer to physical exercise). This is integration in my understanding.'*

Likewise, Karma Lama is living in Norway for the past four years has not attended any formal schooling said; *'we must understand 'it's us who moved here and if we want Norway to accept us, we must put more effort. This is our society now; their culture is our culture, but we cannot expect our culture to be their culture'*.

Whereas Selina Shrestha, a participant in the FGDs said; *'I don't know its exact meaning, but I know it refers to something like we foreigners adopting and mixing up with the native people in the country'*. Keshav Pahari, another participant said; *'I think adoption of Norwegian culture is integration in Norway'*.

Likewise, Shishir Rana, the other participants in the FGDs explained his understanding of integration with an example. He said; *'in Nepal, it was common to start talking to strangers in public places for no specific reasons, which is very different to that of Norwegian culture. In the beginning, it was hard for me to keep quiet for long in public places, especially when I have spare time. But now I will engage myself in the phone instead of talking to a Norwegian stranger. I mean, I have started behaving like a Norwegian'*.

Similarly, for Anita Ghimire, a college student, thinks 'integration' refers to the idea that an individual should not only *'understand but also fluently use the common language, social norms and values in society; wear similar dress; rejoice similar festivals and celebration; feel attached to the history and heritage of the society; interest in the local politics and happenings etc.'*

5.2 Findings in the Structural Dimension: Employment as an Indicator

In this section, I will present the findings in relation to the structural dimension of social integration with the help of employment as an indicator. The findings will be analysed and discussed in the next chapter. The findings presented are expected to address the research question; *'What are the major enabling and challenging factors in their integration?'*

5.2.1 An overview of immigrant's employment

Out of the 16 informants, 15 were working at the time of research. From those who were employed, 11 were with fulltime/permanent employment contracts; 4 with short-termed/temporary contracts. In terms of profession, out of 15 informants, 3 of them were working as a caregiver, one was a school teacher, while 3 of them were cooks. 8 (half) out of 16 of them were working in low-skilled jobs such as cleaning and housekeeping. While two of them were working at managerial level in their respective jobs, all others were at the entry level. Majority of them considered the role of friend and family network to find a job.

For details, see figure 3.

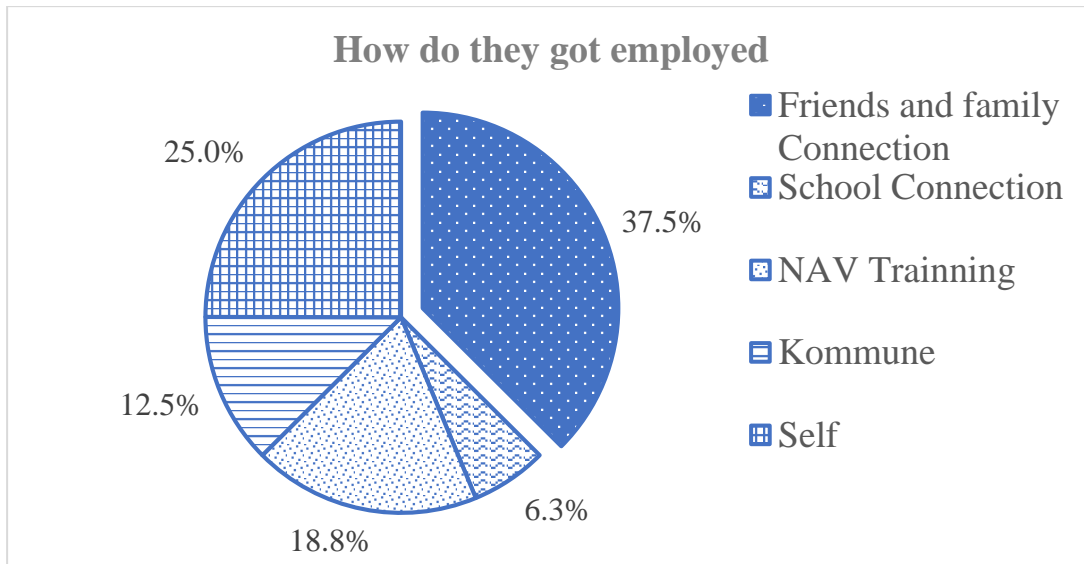


Figure 3: How do they got employed

5.2.2 Education and employment

Out of 16 informants, 11 of them had a university education or skilled training (from Nepal, from Norway or both), 2 of them had secondary education, while 3 of them were literate. In case of participants of FGDs all 7, had at least Bachelor’s degree in education.

Contrary to their strong academic backgrounds and work experience, six of the informants and all 7 of the participants were working in the different sector of employment other than their education as they were unable to find jobs in their related fields. Besides, most of them said that either they had to stay unemployed or there was no other option than taking a physical job. Even though they were all overqualified for the work, 93 percent of them were satisfied with the payment.

Interestingly, 56 percent of the informants have taken Norwegian language course and some of them also took advance/bridging course to equating their education/skills to the Norwegian standards. Such as, Janani used to be a nurse in Nepal, but when she came to Norway, she could not find a related job and started working as a waitress in catering services in Oslo. In contrast to other informants, Janani was not happy as she claims that she was paid much less than nursing. Now she is studying bachelor’s in nursing in Norway and working as a part-time caregiver in an old age home.

Likewise, Gita Shahi, the school teacher, who holds a master's degree in Natural Science (course cannot be revealed to protect her identity) from NTNU but she could not find a suitable job related to her education even after a two-year-search. Then, she joined Norwegian language course and studied pedagogical course in quest of a professional employment in Norway.

5.2.3 Age, immigrant's status and employment

In terms of age, 68.8 percent think that age influences ability of employment as employer prefer young people who are physically strong. According to some of them, though there might be no limitation of age, employers generally prefer people below the age of 30/35 for most of the manual jobs. Whereas, 25 percent of the informants said that it does not have any influence and, 6 percent of them were not sure about the relation of age and employment.

Likewise, according to the informants and the participants, immigrant's status is influential for the availability of the employment. As, 25 percent of the informants said that employers prefer employees who will stay longer in the country, while 18.8 percent said that visa status has nothing to do with work, all that matters is eligibility to work. However, immigrant's status determines their eligibility to work. Almost all the informants with refugee backgrounds and were with a permanent contract work. According to them, the NAV training during the introductory course was the gateway to their employment. Likewise, informants in working visa and family reunification also had comparatively stronger contracts than that of students. However, two of the students said that being students limits their availability hours and consequently effects possibility to get employment.

5.2.4 Gender perception in employment

In terms of gender, 10 out of 11 women were working. The unemployed woman was working before and was now in parental benefit and aimed to start working soon. Five female immigrants mentioned that they never went outside their home in Nepal but now they are employed and are financially independent. Though some of them have experienced discrimination in terms of their colour and for being and belonging from a developing country but almost all the informants and participants opined there is no discrimination in Norwegian labour market in terms of gender. Some of the informants said that they have experienced a huge difference in between Nepal and Norway, in terms of treating women at work. Three of the female informants said that they had a professional career but are working in manual jobs in Norway. According

to them, they enjoy their work more in Norway because they don't have to go through the frequent harassment coming out of patriarchal mindsets of their co-worker. Whereas, Bhim who is working in managerial level gave a different twist to view gender equality. He thinks that gender equality in the labour market has made his work easier than it was in Nepal. She said; *'I had to be careful in making working schedules.... such as; no night shift or early shifts for women but here I don't have to think of that here all are equal...it makes my job easy'*.

Likewise, Shyam was surprised to see so many women in high and stronger positions in his university and in the workplace. He said that almost all the managers in various departments of the hotel he works are female. He said; *'I had studied many things about gender, equality and how could be it be achieved. In Norway, I saw how an equal society looks like and I am glad to a part of it'*.

5.2.5 Informants' experience of being perceived at the workplace

Around 68.8 percent of the informants felt that there is no big difference in treatment in the workplace just because they are immigrants. But most of them opined that the employers prefer Norwegian and Europeans more than any non-European immigrant. Likewise, some of them claimed that it is an indirect and organised form of discernment that you can't label it as a crime or discrimination but it's certain that you don't feel good about it.

Explaining with an example, Hari said; *'in my hotel, the manager indirectly favours workers from specific nationality which is clearly visible in the unequal distribution of working hours we get'*.

Dil Sara working in a cleaning company said that she has frequently become a victim of groupism (mainly of co-worker's interim of nationality) and unfriendly and problematic attitude from co-workers. She explained; *'Sometimes I don't get enough work. My assistant manager is a Thai lady, so she always prefers a Thai worker than me..... can't really say about how Norwegian perceive me in the workplace because I have to deal with very few Norwegians. My boss, supervisors, co-workers almost all are immigrants' themselves'*.

Likewise, Radha also said that it is hard for immigrants in the beginning days of their work to gain the trust of the employer. She explained; *'As an immigrant, we need to work harder to prove that we can do the job. They prefer a Norwegians or European, attest someone who looks like them than us. As a non-western immigrant, it takes a bit more time most of the times to win their heart'*.

However, informants who are in professional jobs said that they have not experienced discrimination as such. Bhim said; *'as a manager, I would like to work with those who are good at work, regardless of their nationality. If you start favouring someone it's not good It's your own loss'*.

In terms of focus group discussions, all the 7 participants were working occasionally. All of them are studying, excluding one of them who (is in family reunification) arrived in Norway, just 7 months before. Likewise, all the participants of FDGs, despite holding at least Bachelors in different academic fields, were working either in cleaning companies or in housekeeping jobs. According to them, they can only work part-time; they lack Norwegian language proficiency and lack a good network to find a better job.

5.3 Findings in Cultural Dimension: Language Proficiency as an Indicator

In this section, I will present the major findings related to cultural dimension. As I took languages proficiency as an indicator to examine the cultural integration, the majority of the findings are related to language. However, to know the importance of the language proficiency it demands information on its uses and impact in the immigrant's social life. Thus, some of the findings overlapped with the findings in the interactive dimension and thus, are presented in the section below. pre. Besides, like the section above, the major findings in the section are also the bases for the analysis and discussion in the next chapter to examine the cultural dimension of social integration. These findings are also expected to address the research question; *'What are the major enabling and challenging factors in their integration?'*

5.3.1 The impact of course on the Norwegian language

Out of 16 informants, around 56 percent have taken some sort of course in Norwegian language, culture, history and rules and regulation. Precisely, four of the informants have taken an 'Introductory Course' provided by, IMDi (The Directorate of Integration and Diversity/ integrating- og mangfoldsdirektoratet). While others claim that they took a private language class and similar university courses. However, only 25 percent of the informants said that these courses have been very useful for them while 31 percent said that they were somewhat useful in their living in Norway.

The informants who have attended the introductory course said that the course not only improved their Norwegian language skills but also gave them knowledge about various ethnicities and nationalities and their culture in Norway. Besides, the informants claimed that such classes enabled them to socialise and interact with other immigrants and Norwegians.

Rubina, who came as a refugee went to a Norwegian high school. Her school used to run extra class only for immigrant students where they would learn Norwegian language and culture. She claims;

'The extra class in school helped me to adjust to the new environment here. Along with Norwegian language, it taught us small social behaviours, how the government, rules work, what is accepted and not accepted in Norwegian culture, how should we behave, and so on'.

Likewise, Dhan Bahadur Chauhan also came as a refugee and took the 2 years introductory course together with his wife. He said; *'We learned almost everything needed for us; the language, history, how the way of life is here, what should we do, we learn most about how government system works here, rules and regulations. It was very practical and has been very useful for us in our everyday life.'*

Similarly, Pabitra, who studied Norwegian language course for 6 months claims that it helped her to communicate with people. She said; *'at least I could do the shopping myself, because of the basic Norwegian class I took.'*

In terms of FGDs participants, 5 out of 7 said that they had taken basic Norwegian Language class for three in Nepal before coming to Norway. However, after joining NTNU, four of them had studied (first level, 15 credit) extra classes on the Norwegian language in the previous semester. Unfortunately, they think that their Norwegian language proficiency is still very weak and plan to study next level of language class soon. While two of the participants plan to register for the same course in the upcoming semester. Whereas, Ranju, the only participants with family unification visa status in the FGDs said;

'I am going to start Norwegian language class as soon as possible. Everyone says that you don't need language for work like housekeeping and cleaning, but I will comprise a bit and invest my time and money in learning the language. I hope, learning language will open doors for better opportunities for me'.

5.3.2 Norwegian language proficiency among the Informants

In terms of Norwegian language proficiency, only 13.3 percent claimed that their Norwegian is excellent, 66.7 percent claimed strong and 25 percent claimed it to be basic. The overview can be depicted as:

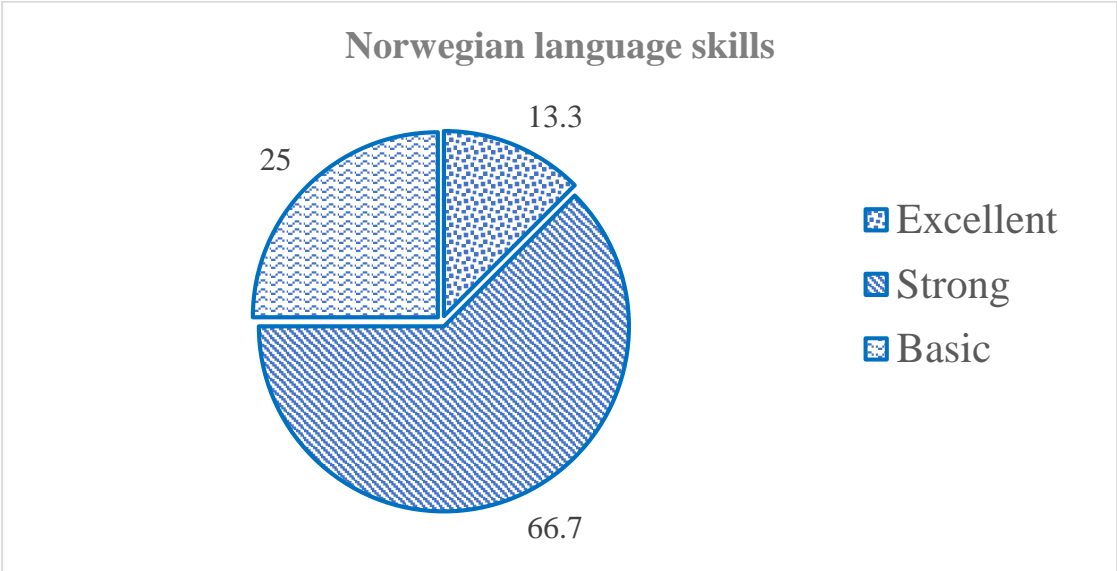


Figure 4: Language proficiency of informants in percent

5.3.3 The significance of language proficiency

The informants and participants expressed that their Norwegian language skills have affected their daily social life. Interestingly, all the informants and participants claimed that language highly influences employment and social networks in Norway. In data, 15.4 percent of the informants said that proficiency in the Norwegian language is more important than any other education to integrate into the Norwegian society. Besides, the immigrants with strong Norwegian language skills claimed that their competency in the Norwegian language gives them more confidence in their daily interactions. According to some of them, being able to speak and understand the common language (Norwegian, in this case) gives an idea of what's is going around, communicate better not only in the public offices but also in their workplace. The Nepalese immigrants with strong Norwegian skills seem to have more Norwegian friends and they claimed that their Norwegian language skill has been getting better.

Besides, strengthen Norwegian language skills has opened new possibilities for some informants. Such as, Janani and Anita, studied one year of Norwegian language course which enabled them to get admitted into their respective academic courses (taught in the Norwegian

language) in the Norwegian universities. Shyam came to Norway as a student, along with his studies he worked hard on his language skills. His fluency in the Norwegian language was very influential to get a permanent job as a cook. Likewise, Chhaya thinks that her daughter who went finished her high school recently got some voluntary community work in the church because of her command in the Norwegian language. Rubina, who married a Norwegian man thinks, directly or indirectly her languages skills in the Norwegians gave her confidence to initiate a communication with him, also helped in making their relationship stronger with time.

Whereas, the informants with basic language skills and all (7) of the participant in the FDGs said that they are working in cleaning and housekeeping jobs because they could not apply for other jobs such as waitress, cashier, sales assistant because of their weak Norwegian language proficiency. Ranju, one of the participants in the FDGs, who is in family reunification visa wanted to join Norwegian language class only because she hopes that it will open better opportunities for her in the Norwegian Labour market. However, Anita denies that greater language proficiency is an enabling factor to enter the labour market. Anita is doing bachelor's in Business Administration and is in the third year of her university. She said; *'all my university course is in Norwegian, I write my assignments in the Norwegian language, and I have acquired good grades, but I can't get the same job as the Norwegian people can. It's still hard for us anyway because Norwegian also have qualifications and high education. As we are foreigners we will always be in second place. The Norwegian, then EU people will always come first'*.

Besides, some of the informants said that that they felt isolated in social events because of the language difficulty. Janani was one of those. As she shares; *'The faculty gave us some money to have that party at the beginning of the session and we (classmates) arranged for a small party. I speak Norwegian but not as good as Norwegian themselves. I felt so isolated in the party. I literally, stayed quiet and tried to skip it'*.

Likewise, Nitisha, the participants in the FGDs highlighted the feeling of being an outsider when there is most of Norwegians. She said; *'I have many Norwegians' and some non-Norwegians (other than Nepalese) friends in my class. During breaks between two classes, we usually have informal talks on different issue..... when there are few Norwegians, they start talking only in Norwegian suddenly, I feel like an outsider'*. To this, the other two girls in the FGDs said its very common and they have also frequently been in such situations. Yet, they all agreed that anyone one would feel the same with any of the foreign language.

Whereas, in another FGDs group, all 4 participants, agreed that it is challenging to learn the Norwegian language in short span as there are different dialects within Norwegian. Besides,

they shared the incidents and their experiences of being misunderstood while trying to communicate with others with their weak Norwegian skill. Meanwhile, Samir said that he is shy about speaking in the Norwegian language with his Norwegian flatmate. *'As soon as I try some Norwegian phrases or words he starts laughing making me so uncomfortable'* he said.

Whereas, 56 percent of the informants claimed that they have tried to advance their language skills and knowledge of Norwegian culture. Some of the informants and participants are participating in various events where there are opportunity and possibility to meet more Norwegians such as language café, kitting cafes, gym, volunteer groups such as in church, Red Barn, Red cross and so on.

Likewise, out of the 16 informants, 8 mentioned that their kids have better Norwegian skills as they went/go to Norwegian school. Interestingly, five of the informants preferred to speak Norwegian at home. Along with claiming to be a fluent speaker in three other languages, (English, Hindi and Nepali), they preferred speaking Norwegian in their home. One of them was Bhim, who said; *'we try to speak in the Norwegian language at home, mostly with our kids because they are good at Norwegian and it's a good way to improve your language; we learn a lot from them'*.

5.3.4 Gender perception in language

In terms of language proficiency, most of the female informants and participants showed equal enthusiasm as males in learning the Norwegian language. Besides, one of the female informant mastered her Norwegian language skills, changed her field of study and secured a professional career in Norway. Whereas, two other female informants used their Norwegian language proficiency as a ladder to peruse higher academic achievements. In addition, two other informants, who went to school in Norway think that their command in Norwegian languages is as excellent as of a native Norwegian. Despite knowing other languages, they feel most comfortable in speaking Norwegian outside their house.

5.4 Findings on the Interactive Dimension: Social Connections as an Indicator

In this section, I will examine interactive dimensions of social integration by looking at the social connections of the informants and the participants. I am presenting the major findings on

the theme which will be analysed and discussed in the next chapter. Simultaneously, I expect these findings hold the answer to the research question; *'What are the major enabling and challenging factors in their integration?'*

5.4.1 Immigrant's neighbourhood and friends

I asked them who lives in their next door and how is their interaction with their neighbours to examine social connections of Nepalese immigrants in their neighbourhood. To this, 37.5 percent of the informants lived in the neighbourhood with Norwegians in the majority, 25 percent had other non-Norwegians (immigrants other than Nepalese) in the majority. While only 18.8 percent of them had some Nepalese compatriots as their neighbour.

In terms of their relationship with their neighbours, half of the informants had no communication at all with their neighbours. Strikingly, most of these informants lived in the neighbourhood with a Norwegian majority. Likewise, only 31.3 percent of informants had a good communication with their neighbours and most of their neighbourhood consisted of more non-Norwegians and some compatriots. Whereas, 18.8 percent of the informants have a communication to some extent with their neighbours. Dhan Bahadur, who lives in Alta said; *'We have some Nepalese here. Mainly who came via the third country settlement and some students. There is a gang of Nepalese people at my work as well. Except Nepalese's, I have many friends who are immigrant like me, you know Eritrea, Somalia.... most of them are from Africa and Syria. There are some Russians also who work with us. But I know very few Norwegian and I have a very formal relationship with them.'*

Dhana who lives in Oslo said; *'We have Norwegians next door. But we are very formal to them. There is very less interaction among neighbours here. I tried to talk to them in the beginning, but I can't, because I don't get in touch with them. When we are passing by, we say hi/hello or sometimes just exchange smiles. It's been a more than a year I am staying in this house but, it has been same from the first day to now. But when we go shopping for my kitchen, I meet some Pakistani immigrants and we exchange our greetings and talk for a while.'*

Hari who lives in Trondheim said; *'It's not like in Nepal, in Norway, you don't know your neighbours and you don't want to bother them.'*

Likewise, more than half (63 percent) report that their friend circle is composed primarily of their own compatriots. Along with compatriots, another 18.8 percent were friends with Non-Norwegians (immigrants to Norway other than the Nepalese) as well. However, only, 18.8

percent of them had friends from all three groups (Compatriots, Non-Norwegians and Norwegian).

In case of FGDs, as all the participant lived in the student village. Almost all their friend list consisted of many Nepalese and few non-Norwegians who are also an international student at NTNU. 4 out of 7 participants shared their flat with at least one Norwegians but all of them claimed to know at least one Norwegian as a friend with whom they are in regular touch. As almost all the participants were students they had many Norwegian classmates. However, they shared their flats other than their classmates in the student villages apartments. Most of them claimed that they have a multicultural environment in the neighbourhood. Besides, most of them opined that there were very few Norwegians in compare to other international students in Moholt.

5.4.2 Building social connections

All the informants said that they are affiliated with Nepalese community organisations in their respective cities and this helps them to get connected with other fellow Nepalese in the city. They also stressed that these community organisations occasionally organised different functions which keep them connected with other Nepalese in the surroundings.

Out of 16 informants, 31.5 percent of them said that they have built up social connections with Norwegians and non-Norwegians through participating in the social events such as; a celebration of the National Constitution Day, different street festivals, concerts, participating in different volunteering events and so on. Some of the informants pointed out that the best way to build up social connection in Norway is by participating in social events where one can meet many people with common interests. According to Rajeeb, frequent meetings with the same person with common interest helps in spreading social networks. While, Bhim, thinks that the best way to build a social network is to join language cafes, clubs, party and volunteer for some events where you can meet many Norwegians, and you have reason to start communication. *'I used to go to language cafes a lot, in my initial days in Norway' he said.*

Likewise, some of them noted that they build up social connections through their formal interaction at educational or other institutions. For example, Anita said that she has spread her personal connections through her education and work-related channels. As she explained; *'I came to Norway when my husband was a student and I became friends with his friends. Then I joined Norsk class and made some friends. After some time, we moved to Oslo, and I joined my*

studies, I made friends there. I mostly meet my Norwegian friends at my school. In the beginning, we were very formal but as we had a lot of group works in our studies in the first and second semester we got informal. Besides, there is a Nepalese community in Narvik and in Oslo. I meet with people in the community festivals and celebrations’.

Likewise, Sabita is also a student but in contrast, she claimed that her close friend list is composed of all Norwegians and other immigrant friends from her school. She also has some few friends for Nepalese community, but all her close friends are non-Nepalese. She explained; *‘I go shopping, hang out, cinemas, bars or pubs all together mostly with my Norwegian friends’.* She claims that most of her close friends are from her school in Norway.

However, on a different note, Chhaya thinks her social connection is much confined to Nepalese community only. According to her, in her initial days in Norway, she casually tried to communicate with random Norwegians in Park and public events places by talking about the weather, basic way of living and shopping. She remembers that than, after a while, the Norwegians would ask her about her origin and how she came to their neighbourhood. *‘When I disclose that I am asylums seeker, they try maintaining a distance with me’.* But she has some Norwegian friends in regular communications. She explained; *‘Some of them are my friends because their kids and my kids study together, and we meet in parents meeting’.*

Whereas, some of the informants were seem reluctant to about building social connections with Norwegian. One of them was Pabitra who said that she does not have much time to think about the social connection with Norwegians. She claimed; *‘I am so occupied with my family and work. I have lived here for almost seven years but still, find it so difficult to understand the Norwegian culture. I am afraid to initiate communication with them (Norwegians) for no specific reason because here it’s not appropriate to talk small things with strangers. I think Norwegians find it awkward to talk with a stranger, especially with immigrant like me. But I am comfortable to speak with another immigrant like me in the Norwegian language.’*

Likewise, one out of the 16 informants is married to a Norwegian man. While the unmarried informant has been in a relationship with a Norwegian man since past 3 years. Besides, one of the informant’s daughter has been with a native Norwegian man. These three informants claimed that getting married to a Norwegian man or having a family-tie with a Norwegian have widened their possibilities to social interaction with the Norwegians. It has required them to interact with more Norwegians such as the family members, relatives and friends of the Norwegian person, they are associated with.

In terms of FGDs participants, Samir, who came to Norway just six months before said that he found Norwegian people very sweet, soft-spoken and too much introvert. Immediately, Kedar Pahari commented that they are introvert only on weekdays. He said that *'the fun nature of a Norwegian is exposed only when they are not studying or working. You can't socialise with Norwegians unless you go skiing, do sports, go for a cabin trip, or exercise together or have a weekend party with them.* In that Shishir added that *'I think it goes same with Norwegian newcomers in a different Norwegian city as well, in Norway, you don't get to know people in a short bus trip, or in the streets. you must give them time to trust you. Unless they have travelled beyond Europe, I think they are not used to with other people than Europeans. Maybe because of it, they find us little strange like we find them, in the beginning'.*

Likewise, in another FGDs done only with female participants, Nitisha compared Nepalese and Norwegian culture and claims that *'in Nepal we don't need very strong foundation to make friends, you build-up friendship with someone traveling together in bus for 4/5 hours or because you worked on a small project together but here, you need to have some strong grounds, such as something/a cause that makes you see each other couple of times, ... because Norwegian take time to build up friendships'. Most of my Norwegian friends are from my school or from the yoga class which I joined just to make new friends.'*

5.4.3 Experience on exchange of culture

I asked informants if they had any experiences of cultural exchange with Norwegians or non-Norwegians at some point of their stay in Norway. The majority (80 percent) of them had some cultural exchange experiences with the Norwegians and non-Norwegians at some point of their stay in Norway. In addition to social events, 18.8 percent of the informants said that they maintain their social connections and have exchanged of culture through mutual celebrations like; birthdays, anniversaries. While 12.5 percent of them have a cultural exchange with Norwegians and non-Norwegians by inviting each other in religious ceremonies and some festivals celebrations. However, almost quarter of the informants (25 percent) said they do not know about the activities where they can have an exchange the culture with others.

Even though, most of the informants had very less exchange of culture with Norwegians they had frequent and regular interaction with non-Norwegians. These interactions generally happen during glossary shopping, train station, restaurants and workplaces. Besides, almost all of them highlighted their interaction with immigrants from South Asia. According to them similar food,

family norms and values, festivals brought them together. Informants from Oslo remembered celebrating Hindu festivals like Diwali and a Dashin. While participants in Trondheim mentioned the interactions with Sri Lankan immigrants in a Temple in Tiller. Likewise, informants from Alta mentioned about her immigrant friend from Eritrea and their cooking fun together.

Whereas, in terms of cultural exchanges with Norwegians, some of the informants experienced some sort of exchange of culture with their classmates in school/university or while of working together with few Norwegians and non-Norwegians in the volunteer groups such as in Red Barna. However, they equally stressed that these incidents were very limited, it happened just once for some informants and for others it has happened around 4/5 time during their stay in Norway. Notably, the minimum stay in Norway of the informants was three years and the maximum years of the informant's stay were 17 years in this research.

Likewise, some of them noted that their education and work help them to have social connections and share culture with other people. Anita, the college student said; *'when we worked in a group (consist of Norwegian and non-Norwegian classmates) for long, we go for lunch together, so slowly we started sharing our food, they really liked it'*.

Whereas, few informants shared their incidents of exchange of culture with Norwegians which they found strange to that in Nepalese culture. Such as, Radha's mother passed away few days before the interview happened. Radha remembers that none of the Norwegians neighbours came to console. She said; *'I felt so strange and lonely. It's so different culture here. If it was in Bhutan or in Nepal, there would so many neighbours coming to console'*.

Dil Sara shared that she invited two of her husband's Norwegian friends for coffee so that they could build up a friendship. *She said; 'I invited them because we knew each other for so long, we had frequent talks as well. They came for dinner as well. We, (me, my husband and my daughter) and them (Norwegian couples) chatted a lot. we talked about our food, painting (shows the painting on the wall).....Nepalese culture.it was very good dinner. But after that, they were kind of avoiding us, I don't know the reality, but I felt so. They never called us even for tea, or coffee.... They do talk nicely if we happen to bump into one another but, there is nothing more than that. I find it strange..... I don't know what went wrong'*.

Likewise, Chhaya remembers that she used to invite some Norwegian friends for dinner or lunch sometimes, and they used to come and enjoyed her cooking. Now, she had expected that her Norwegian friends will also invite her to their house at least for a coffee, but it never

happened. Since then, she has stopped inviting them. She laughed and said; *'they invite our kids and we invite their kids in our children's birthdays and that's it'*.

Likewise, most of the informants were confined within the Nepalese community and rarely had an exchange of culture with other immigrants and Norwegians. Such as Dhana Gurung, the current student, said that her network is mostly with only people from Nepal. She says that she goes shopping with them, call each other for small talks, for tea, have a party in her house. She also stressed that she likes to invite newcomers from Nepal for dinner or lunch sometimes. She said; *'this kind of activities ties us together. Besides, in Norway, if you are into a serious problem, no one will come to rescue you. Either government (police, ambulances) will come or people from the community will come. No matter how close you are with others (referring to non-Nepalese), I don't think they will be there for you. Your own people are your own people you know'*.

In terms of FGDs, most of the participants said that as they all live in Moholt, they have a multicultural environment among students. However, as there are more international students than Norwegians, the participants also had more opportunities for exchange of culture with other immigrants than Norwegians. However, some the participants who shared their flats with Norwegians had shared some of their exchanges of culture with them. Nitisha Sharma, one the student, who shares her flat with other three students (from Norway, France, Ethiopia) from different countries was so excited to share about the recent 'momo' (Nepalese cuisine) party they had in their flat. She said; *'When I was cooking, my flatmates used to say that the aroma and of my food is strange. I offer them to taste my food. Now they liked the spices so much that we recently we recently made momos in the flat. They all have shown interest in our (Nepalese) cultural evening in Trondheim. I am so excited to invite them to come Nepalese cultural evening'*

Likewise, Diya, who is now in her second years of masters recalled the past Nepalese cultural evening in Trondheim and said; *'Most of my Norwegian classmates were there in our last cultural evening. I wore a sari in the event and one of my Norwegian friends wanted to try it. She was wondering how we walk in a sari'*.

Most of the informants and participants interpreted Norwegian ways of behaviour as generally pleasant, but distant. Bhim, who has been living more than 17 years in Norway, opined that Norwegian people were not necessarily being negative if they did not say 'hello'. *'It might be because they were not interested in neighbourly socialising or don't want to disturb anyone unless it's very important'* he said.

5.4.4 Social connections with age

I asked the informants if age influence buildings social network. 43.8 percent said that the age does influence, while 50 percent said age has no influence in building a social network. Whereas, 6.3 percent informants said they were not sure as they never experienced it.

Besides, out of those who said age influence building a social network, most of them said that as matters as is easier to make networks with the people of the same age. While, other opined that the young people take part in more social events than the old, which them make more social connections. For example, Sabita said; *'I have friends of my age, I go school, I go party, with them. Obviously, my mom and aunts will not go party with girls of my age. They have a very limited circle. I mean they have fewer friends then I have. I think ... so, maybe it's easier for us to makes friends than them'*.

However, Rubina thinks that more than age it's 'activities' that the individual is involved helps to make friends in Norway. *She explained; 'I made my friends at schools, we studied together, we have various academic topics to discuss and share so I have more friends who have similar academic backgrounds.... which obviously my mother cannot make'*.

However, most of them argued that the person's behaviour and nature towards the people matter more than the age in building up social connections.

5.4.5 Social connections and education

social connections in Norway, 31.3 percent of the informants said that level of education influences building up social connections, while 56.2 percent of them said that education has nothing to do with building a social network and 12.5 percent said that they are not sure as they never thought about it. Out of 31.3 percent who said that the education matters, more than half (60 percent) said that education helps to open various topics to broaden communication. Such as, Selina thinks that her education has influenced her social connections in Norway as she thinks that her interest and knowledge in geography and anthropology has helped her to initiate and continue the conversation with many Norwegians as they need some major issue to interact in Norway. Likewise, Karma, who do not have higher school education share that sometimes she lacks confidences to make an argument with educated people (regardless of their nationality) but her weaker language proficiency adds her fear in communication with a non-Nepalese.

Besides, out of 56.2 percent who said education doesn't matter, 25 percent of them opined that no one cared about education status while making friends in Norway while the half of them said that it is universal that the people are judged by their behaviour but not by the education. Interestingly, in their opinion, learning the Norwegian language is more important than having a good education to build up social connections in Norway.

5.4.6 Social connections and immigrant status

In terms of influence of immigrant's status in building social network, 21.6 percent said that the immigrant's status does influence on building social network while more than half (57.4 percent) said it to have no influence in making social network and 21 percent said that they are not sure as they never experienced any difference.

Rubina said that *'it makes you feel inferior by yourself, the feeling of being a refugee itself is painful. If someone asked more detail information about my background, I feel so embarrassed and awkward'*.

While Radha has a different stand in it. Though her immigrant status was not directly related to her social interaction, it certainly did influence her activities in Norway and gave a reason for social interaction with Non-Nepalese. She said; *'When you are a refugee, you go to vocational class and meet other refugees. Even at work or other places other people with the same status so attachment because we all share the same pain and face similar difficulties.'*

5.4.7 Gender perception on social connections

Interesting for male informants the social events were a 17 may celebration, concerts, street festivals, language café, sports events, hiking. While for most of the female informants the social events were the 17 may padre. Whereas, excluding two, all other female informants said that they build up social connection in religious and cultural celebrations, outdoor picnic with family and friends, shopping, tea/coffee chats. Some of the female informants also stressed that they are so busy with their family and work that they have very limited time to think about social interaction with Norwegians.

Interestingly, none of the male informants mentioned that their cultural exchanges with native Norwegian were because of their kids or spouse. Whereas, 6 out 10 married female informants revealed that most of their exchange of culture with native Norwegians are generally confined with their husband's or kids' social circle. Such as, Gita, who is a school teacher and has been living in Norway for 10 years says that she has a very limited exchange of culture with native

Norwegians. She shares that her cultural exchange is more initiated by her husband and kids as they have more Norwegian friends. *'They invite us, and we invite them for lunch or dinner sometimes. Personally, I have rarely invited Norwegians to my house'* she said.

5.4.8 Feelings of being perceived by Norwegian society

Statistically, 37.5 percent of the informants feel that they are perceived as equal in the Norwegian society. but 25 percent of them feel perceived as unequal, while 37.5 percent of them can't really say how they are been perceived by the Norwegian society. Whereas, in terms of discriminating, nearly, half (46.7 percent) of the informants had not experienced any sort of discrimination by the Norwegians, while 20 percent of me said that they had some instance of discrimination, and 33.3 percent of the informants were not sure as they had not that many interactions with Norwegians.

Shyam thinks that Norwegians are very curious about immigrants and are welcoming but also don't want to come out of their personal space to mingle with immigrants. Whereas, Rubina got very emotional on this issue and said; *'Well, I am married to a Norwegian, so you can guess, how I feel. My husband is in love with me! I feel good. I mean my husband, his family, his friends, my Norwegian friends do not have any problem with my refugee background. I have been welcomed into his family very well. I feel so glad about it.'*

Like her, Sabita also said; *'I don't feel any difference. But yes, when my friends invited me to their house for project works, his/her parents used to ask me a lot of questions in the beginning. I used to feel uncomfortable, but I think that's normal now. Every parent wants to know with whom your child is with.'*

While Rajeeb thinks it depends on the context and the characteristics of the Norwegian you are talking. According to him, *'if you are in touch with university educated Norwegians or Norwegians with more multicultural exposure, they seem to have a very positive attitude towards immigrants, Norwegians are very welcoming to Nepalese, most of them know Sherpas as people making stone pavements in Mountain'*.

However, some of the informants shared that they have felt discrimination sometimes. Radha Chauhan is confused either to call it a discrimination or not, but she certainly doesn't feel good about it. In her words; *'I don't know its discrimination or not, but I know they don't like those who don't work here. They (Norwegians) feel immigrants who are not working are eating their tax but doing nothing. They don't realise that finding a job is not always easy for an immigrant'*

in a new place'. Besides, they are so judgemental about immigrants that they think we are not trustworthy people.'

Similarly, Dhana Gurung has also felt discrimination at a social event. She narrates the incident this way; *'I am a Hindu, I don't eat beef, and at of the summer party of our company work, I was not eating beef. My co-workers didn't say anything bad directly but kind of mocked at me. They said either you are a vegan, vegetarian or eat everything. The logic they give was; if you eat lamb or chicken meat, you should eat every meat unless you have some allergies. I felt so alone and misunderstood. It was shocking for me to see them valuing allergies but not equally valuing our religious sentiments.'*

I raised the same question in the focus group discussions. Most of the participants said that in case of Trondheim, the city has accepted and cherished it as 'a city of students'. Besides, they all agreed on the point that society in Moholt and its surroundings seems to have multicultural exposures and thus, is welcoming to the student, regardless of their nationality.

5.5 Findings on Identification: Sense of Belongingness as an Indicator

In this section, am presenting the major findings in the identification dimension of social integration by looking at the 'Sense of Belongingness' of the informants and the participants. As in the previous section, I am only presenting the major findings on the theme which will be analysed and discussed in the coming chapter. Whereas, I believed that these findings will help me to address two research question in this thesis; *'Do they feel socially integrated into the Norwegian society? and how do they position themselves in the social integration process?'*

5.5.1 Feeling as part of Norwegian society

Interestingly, 62.5 percent of the informants feel that they are a part of Norwegian society. While 31.3 percent were not sure on this. Informants pointed out that they were excising basic rights to education, healthcare, right to work depending upon their visa status. Besides, they claimed to have excised these rights responsibly. In addition, most of them pointed out that they respect and follow the Norwegian rules and regulations as a responsible resident of the country. Some of them did not hesitate to say that they have become a responsible person towards the society than they were before coming to Norway. As an example; Bhim said, *'I get angry when I see garbage thrown outside of the garbage collecting containers in my neighbourhood'*.

Rubina, who is married to a Norwegian and was a new mother at the time of the interview said; *'This is my home, I have my family here, in fact, I have my everything here. I came to Norway when I was 18 and completed my high school here. I am studying bachelor and want to continue my studies here. I started staying alone from the age of 20 like Norwegians. I am married here; my son is born here. If I am not in Alta (my father's place) I speak Norwegian more than I speak Nepali. If asking about any other country of my backgrounds, its Bhutan is only in the stories I heard from my grandparents and parents. I have a lot of memories from Nepal, but my life has been best in Norway. I feel home here and a part of this society.'*

Likewise, Sabita, who came to Norway in her teenage and is living her since 2007 said; *'I have spent almost a decade in Norway. I went to school here, most of my close friends are either Norwegians or immigrants who are like me (in process of being a Norwegian). Except for Nepalese, I prefer speaking Norwegian even though I know English and a bit of Hindi. I feel Norwegian food is healthy than our spicy food. On weekends, I like partying with my Norwegian friends or go for a beer in a pub with friends. In overall, I don't feel less Norwegian.'*

I had asked a similar question to Radha as well, but she gave a different angle to it. She said; *'it's another way. I feel this society is mine. This is a part of my life, my living. Though I am a Nepali, I have my roots there but after these many years of living, I feel attached to this place, my house is here. In short, now this society belongs to me and I will do my best to adopt the culture and way of living here.'*

Whereas, some of the informants considered them self as partially integrated into the society. Karma was one of them. She thinks that *'it takes a long way to fully integrate into any new society and we should not expect that to happen in four years'* (her duration of stay in Norway). However, she claims that she is doing the same thing that a Norwegian in the society is doing in their normal life which makes her like them. She said; *'I work, pay tax, respect the laws and rules, take holidays, enjoys my family and vacations as Norwegians do; I follow the Norwegian system'*.

Likewise, Shyam also thinks that he is a part of the Norwegian society *'... because I am into the Norwegian system, I have adopted many things of Norwegian culture which are different to Nepalese culture, such as I go pubs, I go cabin trips, I also make very selective friends. These days, I genuinely prefer Norwegian foods, I love working out/training There is a long list'*.

Likewise, Rajeeb who came to Norway in 2009 thinks that he is in love with *'Norwegian culture and way of living.'* He said; *'When I go Nepal after a week or two I feel like coming back here.'*

I am troubled by the crowd and sound we have in Nepal. I don't like spicy food these days. I love exercising a lot. People (newcomers) complain a lot about the weather here but I don't have that much to complain about, I feel adapted to the weather as well.'

Whereas, Dil Sara seemed very confused on this and said *'I don't know what to say. I feel I can live like this, but I don't have any Norwegian friends. I don't think they hate us, but they don't want to become friends with us. But I like my life in Norway, I like almost everything, and I feel happy about it. I don't like someone who opposes Norwegian system, I don't know why I get defensive in this Does that make me a Norwegian?'*

Whereas, Dhana referred her language abilities and said that even after staying another four years in Norway, she won't be able to speak like a native Norwegian and these differences will always make her different to Norwegians. She said; *'Norwegians speak Norwegian' and I can never speak Norwegian like them even I practice for another four years'*

I asked a similar question in both the FGDs but most of the participants think that it's too early for them to discuss the topic. Meanwhile, Kedar, one of the participant claimed that *'it is very difficult to be a part of Norwegian society'*. He further said that *'I give you one example, whenever you get official letters such as from health centre, NAV or bank, they are generally in Norwegian. If you are not good at Norwegian, we must depend upon googling translate or run to our friends. So, I think it's very difficult to be get integrated into this society'*.

However, Ranju thinks that Norway is still a closed society and despite learning the common language, Nepalese have a difficult social life in Norway. She claimed that her friends who have migrated to elsewhere (mostly to the US, Canada and Australia) seem more engaged with the host population and other immigrants in their respective countries. Therefore, thinks that *'Norwegian people do not hate immigrants neither they show acceptance I think they don't like diversity ... mainly from non-Europeans and Non-Western that much'*.

Likewise, Shishir bluntly said; *'it is better to migrate and settle down where you feel welcomed not where you are ignored, and the natives are indifferent towards immigrants'*. He gave some of the examples of why he thinks it is very difficult to be a part of Norwegian society and concluded; *'I am okay with being a guest here, they are very nice people to know but I don't think they feel the same about us'*.

5.5.2 Long-term plans in Norway

The informants were asked if they had any long-term plans in Norway, however, most of them preferred answering it as a 'wish' instead of 'plan'. In terms of data, 75 percent said that they wish to live longer in Norway. While some of them were planning to apply for a permanent resident or a Norwegian citizenship if possible. Likewise, I asked the same question in both FGDs as well. In contrast to the informants, most of the participants did not have any such plans. They wanted to finish their studies and return to Nepal while three of them were open to it. However, almost all agreed that it is fascinating to live in Norway. Notably, the findings from the FGDs and interviews were highly overlapping in this topic. Thus, I am presenting them together in a mixed bag.

Almost all the informants and participants noted the health facilities in Norway as an attracting factor for them. Besides, six of the informants had there at least one child in Norway. Gita who gave birth to her first child in Nepal and second child in Norway compared the healthcare facilities in both the countries. And said; *'giving birth to my son in Norway was the best thing that happened to me in Norway'*. Some of the informants pointed out on the high unemployment rate in Nepal while, in Norway, there is a satisfactory income even in a manual job.

Another attraction in Norway is its free education. The informants and participants who are getting/got the university education in Norway are getting a world-class education and that also for free. Samir said; *'I feel lucky to be a student here'*. Likewise, all the informants and participants said that they feel very secure in Norway. In addition, the participants and informants appreciated the high human right standards in Norway. They noted the rights of the child, facilities to senior citizen and the assistance to physically challenged and similar facilities of the Norwegian welfare system which makes it an attractive place to live in.

I now present, some of the interesting statements made by the informant in references to this topic. Dhan Bahadur, who came to Norway as a refugee had a very philosophical reply. He said; *'I don't feel like Norwegian, I feel I am a Nepali from the heart, but I feel this is my country now and I have to adjust anyhow with the climate, people and the way we live here. We' after coming here from Nepal, we have nowhere to go, we fill like settled down, our kids are also doing very good. At least we are having a tension free life. Yes, we were more social and might have more social and cultural connections with the society there (referring to Nepal), but it was very painful and pitiful to live in refugee camps. Now we are in Norway, our children are happy, so we are happy. If you don't feel at home here, where you live, you will never be happy, so we are happy'*.

Likewise, Sabita considers Norway as her only home. She said *'I don't know any other society. It is the society I grew up. I have very few understandings of our societies in Nepal or Bhutan, that also spiced my parents and relatives' experience. But Norway is a place where I grew up'. I know Norway better than any other place'.*

Likewise, Bhim Oli, who was in Norway for the last 17 years, said *'I don't see any reason for not being a part of it because I have a kind of attachment to this country. before coming here, I was in Portugal. I stayed in Germany for 5 years. But I find Norway, the best. I like Norwegian society.... This society believes in equality so much. Besides, I am from high hills in Nepal, and in Norway, I love the geography, I love the greenery around. I feel somehow like being at home. My kids know Norway better than Nepal. I don't say it's only the best place to live but it's certainly one of them'.*

5.5.3 Gender perception on sense of belongingness

Seven out of 11 female informants feel that they are a part of Norwegian society and 8 of them wished to prolong their stay in Norway. In compared to male informants, female informants showed strong attachment and addressed Norway as their home. For four female informants, their attachment was not only because of the quality of life but also because they had family and relatives in Norway. Likewise, the health care system in Norway was the influencing factor to wish a longer stay in the country for five female informants and three female participants.

Besides, all the female informant and participants praised the level of women's safety in Norway. Most of them pointed that they felt safe on walking at night, talking to people and working night shift which is near to impossible in Nepal. Referring to the fallen patriarchal boundaries in the Norwegian society, Sabita and Rubina who spend their teenage in Norway said that they feel very fortunate for it.

6 Research Analysis and Discussion

This chapter constitutes the analysis of empirical data presented in the earlier chapter. The empirical data were derived from the sixteen life history interviews and two focus group discussions (FGDs). As Dyblie Nilsen argues, “*the relationship between empirical data and theory is an utmost requirement of the analytical process*” (Dyblie Nilsen, 2005, p. 118). In this chapter, I am going to analyse each of the theme presented in the earlier chapter and discuss them with related theories and previous research conducted on the relevant issues. As before, I am using the term ‘informants’ for the those who gave me their life history interviews and the term ‘participants’ to those who participated in the focus group discussions (FGDs) while the term ‘immigrants’ donates both.

I have given my best to analyse the findings while relating them to the existing theories and seek answers to all the research questions; *‘How do Nepalese immigrants understand social integration in Norway? Do they feel socially integrated into the Norwegian society? How do they position themselves in the social integration process? What are the major enabling and challenging factors in their integration ?’*

6.1 Analysing Informant’s Understanding on Social Integration

I found that most of the informant seems to know the term ‘integration’. However, their understanding of integration was influenced by various factors like; their education, experiences and background as informants with higher education and who have participated in the introductory course seem to somehow familiar with the concepts related to integration and had a bit of understanding in comparison to other immigrants. Initially, most of the immigrant said that they knew the meaning of integration and do understand what it refers to but when I asked them to share their understanding, most of them were confused. They struggled to find a proper word to describe their views towards integration.

Despite their confusion, some of them attempted to explain the gist of their knowledge on integration. Most of the immigrants and participants considered integration as a long-term and challenging process. However, they seem to understand integration as giving up their culture and adapting to a new society. Besides, most of them seem to understand integration as immigrant’s moral responsibility to adapt and adjust to the culture of the host society. But in fact, “*integration clearly is not a one-sided process in which only migrants play a role. The recipient society equally bears a responsibility*” (Entzinger & Biezeveld, 2003, p. 28). None of

the immigrants in this research spoke about the equal responsibility of the recipient society in their understanding of integration. This clearly shows that they have pressurised themselves to act as a Norwegian to fit in the society as they expect it's only their responsibility to act for integration. They seem completely unaware that integration is a multi-dimensional process in which not only the immigrants but also the society and the state have a role (EC, 2011; Mestheneos & Ioannidi, 2002, p. 306; Schibel et al., 2002).

Interestingly, immigrants who took part in any kind of introductory course or those who have higher education, seem to be familiar with the term 'integration' but their understanding of 'what integration means?' seems like what scholars called an 'assimilation'. As "*assimilation refers to a unidirectional, one-sided process in which the immigrants and their descendants give up their culture and adopt completely to the society they have migrated to*" (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2006, p. 11). Besides, according to the classical assimilation theories immigrants were supposed to change almost completely to merge with the mainstream culture and society' (Garcés-Mascareñas & Penninx, 2016, p. 3).

6.2 Analysing the Structural Dimension

Structural integration refers to "*the acquisition of rights and the access to position and status in the core institutions of the host society*" (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2006, p. 9). The job market is one of the 'core' institutions while, access to employment is a key indicator of immigrant's integration (OECD/EU, 2015, p. 107). I took employment as a consequent indicator to examine the structural dimension of integration. Majority of the informants and participants were employed during the time of this research. This reflects that the Nepalese immigrants have found a place in the Norwegian labour market. However, only two of them had reached/secured managerial position, which reflects a weak status of Nepalese immigrants in the labour market. The family and social connections of the immigrants seem to be an enabling factor for them to get employed and be a part of this core institution.

Likewise, the type of immigrant's employment, portrays a comprehensive picture of immigrant's status in the labour market (OECD/EU, 2015, p. 107), obviously, some of the immigrants did not have enough education to compete in the professional sectors of labour market while for those who were educated, their education background was incompatible with the demand of Norwegian labour market. Consequently, despite having higher academic

degrees most of the Nepalese immigrants are working as a manual labour out of their field of education.

However, some of them have upgraded their education and competency by joining bridge courses in Norway and equating with the standards of Norwegian labour market. Besides, as an attempt to join the labour-market faster, they have also changed their field of study with the demand in the market. Overall, having an education background, which is demand in the Norwegian labour market could be an enabling factor for economic integration whereas, in lack of compatible educational background, immigrants are confined to limited opportunities, also in the sector of manual labour. Interestingly, they seem to be satisfied with their jobs even though it is not related to their academic background because of the satisfactory wages.

In term of age, more than half of the informants and all the participants said that age influences employability. According, to them, young people are preferred by the employers for the manual jobs with an assumption that they are more physically fit and stronger. Thus, it is evident that young age is an enabling factor while the opposite could be a limiting factor to integration into the labour market in Norway.

In reference to immigrant's status, employers seem to prefer people who would stay longer (Friberg & Midtbøen, 2017). I also found that the immigrants with limited duration of stay had much difficulty to get employed in comparison to those who had a permit for a longer stay as the refugees were the most to have a permanent job contract. Similarly, informants with working visa and family reunification also had a stronger working contract as their visa status did not limit their availability at work. However, students mostly had a temporary job contract as they stay in the country for a short period and can only work 20 hrs/week. Likewise, in terms of gender, female immigrants who had never worked outside or earned claimed that their employment in Norway has given them more economic independence. Besides, few of the female immigrants appreciated the equality among man and women in the Norwegian labour market.

Notably, all informants with a refugee background mentioned that the NAV training during the introductory course was a gateway to their employment. In this regard, the Norwegian government's approach to the economic integration of immigrants (mainly to asylum seekers and refugees) by providing necessary resources for the immigrants to find employment in Norwegian labour market (White Paper No.6.[2012], 2013) seems to be successful.

In terms of being perceived at the workplace by the Norwegians, few informants highlighted that they were in those labour sectors such as cleaning and housekeeping which is mostly occupied by the immigrants like themselves. As they didn't have the possibility of proper social interaction with the Norwegians they do not have any experience of discrimination by the locals.

Whereas, based on their experiences, some of the immigrants were convinced that they were discriminated at their workplace. The White Paper No.6.[2012] prohibits both direct and indirect discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, national origin, descent, skin colour, language, religion, or belief in all areas of society except for family life and personal relationships (White Paper No.6.[2012], 2013, p. 115). However, Scholars (Entzinger & Biezeveld, 2003; Midtbøen, 2013) have accepted that different forms of racism and discrimination exist in immigrant's integration and they have pointed that *"the most obvious discrimination direct at migrants is violence and a decision to deny a job because of his/her background"* (Entzinger & Biezeveld, 2003, p. 28).

However, in my research, as there were no direct physical or verbal attacks; most of the Nepalese immigrants could not label their experiences as an overt form of racism or discrimination. In the same line, Entzinger & Biezeveld, (2003) have explained that *"much more hidden form of discrimination also exist which is not always easy to prove in individual cases"* (Entzinger & Biezeveld, 2003, p. 28). In this research, Nepalese immigrants pointed out that unequal distribution of work, the unfriendliness of co-workers and favouritism to specific nationalities were some of the discriminations they face in the Norwegian labour market.

In terms of unfriendliness, some of the informants shared somehow similar experiences. The summary of their argument was that when there is the majority of immigrants from a specific nationality in a workplace, the majority unites together against immigrants in minority, influencing the working environment. As Nepalese immigrants are in minority, they are frequently affected by such working environment. Likewise, most of the informants in this research claimed that they are preferred less than the Norwegians, Europeans and East Asians. Besides, another highlighted issue by the informants was that instead of evaluating them by their work performance they were quickly judged and less trusted just because they are immigrants (more frequently because they are a non-white and from developing country). Similar results were found in a recent research done by two researchers; Friberg & Midtbøen, (2017). They noted that in the (soft/un) skilled labour market, *"immigrant niches tend to be structured hierarchically in ways that match with the social status of these groups, resulting in*

labour division based on nationality” (Friberg & Midtbøen, 2017, p. 1). Particularly, in Norway, refugees and non-western immigrants were regarded as less desirable than both Swedes and Eastern Europeans and were also generally last in the hiring queue in the Norwegian labour market (Friberg & Midtbøen, 2017, p. 11). Undeniably, these hidden forms of discrimination also affect the prospects of immigrants work and “*obstructs the integration process of migrants in the labour force*”(Entzinger, 1990, p. 64).

Notably, such discriminations were experienced by the informants and the participants working in unskilled and manual jobs. Immigrants working in professional jobs and at higher levels did not deny such discrimination yet, opined that it depends upon individual’s perception as well. Whereas, in previous research done in Netherlands and Sweden demonstrated that immigrants with higher levels of occupational skills are less often exposed to unequal treatments than the low-skilled immigrants (Bovenkerk, Gras, Ramsøedh, Dankoor, & Havelaar, 1995; Carlsson & Rooth, 2007)

Overall, Nepalese immigrants are actively working in the Norwegian labour market. However, in lack of Norwegian language proficiency, and educational background compatible to the demands in the Norwegian labour market, they have very limited employment opportunities and thus are confined mostly in the sector of manual labour. On the contrary, strong Norwegian language skills with an education, which is in demand in the Norwegian labour market will ease their economic and structural integration into the Norwegian society. In addition, a Nepalese immigrant, in his/her young age; who has skills and vocational training according to the market demand; and who have the possibility to stay longer in Norway seems to secure a better place in the Norwegian labour market. Nepalese immigrants have faced a hidden form of discrimination in the job place which can be considered as a negative factor in their economic integration.

6.3 Analysing the Cultural Dimension

According to Bosswick and Heckmann, cultural integration refers to a “*cognitive, behavioural and attitudinal change*” (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2006, p. 10) which assumes acquiring language and cultural competency of the host society will enable integration. Besides, to the understanding of integration as a two-way process, it demands a cultural integration through the inclusion of elements from minority cultures into the majority cultures. The changes in the majority culture could be reflected in the change of the composition of the population in the

society. Significantly, the recent integration policies in Norway aim to facilitate the cultural integration of immigrants by providing language and knowledge about Norwegian society and culture (White Paper No.6.[2012], 2013).

According to the findings of this study, the immigrants who came in as a refugee and have gone through the introduction program had a comparatively good connection with other immigrants. They claimed that such classes not only boarded their Norwegian language but also indirectly educated them about various ethnicities, nationalities and culture. Thus, language skills and knowledge acquired from the introductory course or similar courses focused on Norwegian language, society and culture seem to be an enabling factor for the cultural integration.

Besides, I focused on Norwegian language proficiency as an indicator to analyse the cultural integration of Nepalese immigrants. Language is a fundamental competency in an individual which enables or challenges his/her interaction with the host society. It is the master key to express, understand, share thoughts and feelings with each other. In reference to immigrant's integration, it is the principal tool with which immigrants can build their social network, access resource and participate in the core institutions of the host society. Thus, it is evident that lack of dominant language proficiency hinders access to better economic, social, and political opportunities (Dustmann & Fabbri, 2003; Shields & Price, 2002). In reference to Norway, the Norwegian language is the official language. Thus, better Norwegian language proficiency supports structural integration as it enables better communication of immigrants with the core institutions in the country. Besides, the Norwegian language serves as a common language not only in communication with the members of the host society but also with non-Norwegians who have a different mother tongue. Meanwhile, all Nepalese immigrants involved in this research acknowledged that their Norwegian language skills highly influenced not only their employment but also their social life.

The informants who have stayed longer in Norway and had strong language proficiency were the ones to share positive experiences. One of the common advantages of having strong Norwegian language skill was that it helped them to increase their social network. Likewise, it gave them the self-confidence to interact formally at in interacting public institutions or informally in shopping malls and parks with non-Norwegians and Norwegians. They all agreed that strong Norwegian language skills have enabled them to have a clear communication with others as both the parties understood each other well. Evidently, acquiring Norwegian language skills had opened new opportunities for Nepalese immigrants from perusing a university degree to permanent employment in Norway. For an instance, the Norwegian language competence

provided them with an opportunity to advance their academic qualification at comparatively cheaper costs; as university education is free in Norway in comparison to other parts of the world.

Though cultural integration mainly concerns immigrants, it also demands from the host society to learn new ways to related to immigrants and adapt to their needs. The existing Norwegian integration policy are working with major public authorities to achieve their integration goals. The authorities are continuously taking account of society's cultural diversity while designing and involving immigrants in their activities. Notably, events such as language café and knitting cafes are actively run in many parts of Norwegian municipalities, where immigrants have the opportunity to interact with Norwegians and have the possibility to practice their language skills.

These settings are aimed to facilitate two-way communication between the immigrants and the Norwegians. In one hand, it helps immigrants to improve their language skills and on the other hand fosters mutual understanding. Almost all the Nepalese immigrants involved in this research had identified these opportunities, while some of them had utilized/were utilising it to enhance their language proficiency. Meanwhile, a recent research done in the (*Språkkafé*) language cafes run within public libraries in three Norwegian cities also concluded that; having attended the cafés have improved immigrant's knowledge of Norwegian language and culture and the immigrants at these three cities were potentially better equipped for future participation in the Norwegian public sphere (Krueger, 2018, p. 19).

In comparison to most of the informants, all the participants and some of the informants' lack Norwegian language skills. They considered their language skills at weak or very basic level. The weakness seems to have limited their overall social interaction with the host society as it created frequent miscommunication and misunderstanding between the Nepalese immigrants and Norwegians. Likewise, in addition to employment opportunities, weak Norwegian language competence seems to have pushed immigrants into isolation in various social events. Eventually, discouraging them to participate further in the interaction with Norwegians.

Besides, lack of proper Norwegian language skills frequently made immigrants a different person in a group with a majority of group members speaking and understanding Norwegian languages. Most of the immigrants share the feeling of being an outsider in their own classrooms or a working unit when the majority of their classmates/co-workers mostly communicated in Norwegian language and they could not understand anything unless someone translates that in English. It seems to be an obvious fact and is well depicted in similar research

in the past. For instance, Sollund (2001) illustrated the power of host language in the integration of immigrants. The study portrayed that those immigrants who failed to learn the Norwegian language proficiently ended up doing menial jobs and limited themselves in building up new connections in the Norwegian society (Sollund, 2001 cited in Hagelund, 2003a, p. 181)

To sum up, as language is the key to social integration (Ager & Strang, 2008; Bosswick & Heckmann, 2006; Kaushik et al., 2016), Norwegian language proficiency is a must for integration into the Norwegians' society. However, it does not automatically create a sense of belonging to the state. Undeniably, it is equally evident that through cultural integration represents a deeper integration of immigrants, it alone cannot lead the formulation of a coherent society; because the competency in the host language only is not enough to create an attachment to the country. To develop the attachment, both the immigrants and host population need to establish social connections and interact, understand and exchange their cultures. In other words, as mentioned in the conceptual framework by Heckmann and his colleagues (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2006; Heckmann, 2005; Heckmann & Schnapper, 2003); the cultural and interactive dimensions of integration have a close association with the identification of immigrants within the society and thus, all dimensions should be studied together.

6.4 Analysing the Interactive Dimension

Bosswick & Heckmann, (2006) explain interactive integration as “*acceptance and inclusion of immigrants into the primary relationships and social networks of the host society*” (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2006, p. 10). The interactive integration is operationalised and indicated through people's private or primary group interaction, such as; friendship, partnerships, marriage, networks and emotional ties with the natives (Kısar Koramaz, 2014, p. 50). Evidently, where and with whom one lives designates his social connections (Cassiers & Kesteloot, 2012). As there are a widespread assumption and belief that a person interacts with those living nearby (Søholt & Lynnebakke, 2015, p. 2316); in a neighbourhood, or at the place where one lives, and try to make crucial effects to build social relations and network which eventually leads to integration process of the individual into the society (Kısar Koramaz, 2014).

It is assumed that ethnically mixed neighbourhoods facilitate social relationship and interaction between majority and ethnic minorities. Thus, a mixed ethnic neighbourhood is crucial for achieving social cohesion (Brown, 2013; Phillips, 2006). Whereas, Social cohesion implies the bonds or the ‘glue’ that embrace people together in a culturally diverse society in particular

(Søholt & Lynnebakke, 2015, p. 2316). Most Nepalese immigrants had Norwegians in the surroundings but more than half of them had no connection with their neighbours. Besides, all the informants stated that the natural and physical surroundings of the Norwegian neighbourhood were very pleasant. However, their experiences in socialising with Norwegian neighbours were very pessimistic. The experience of Nepalese immigrants in this research was almost similar to the experiences of another group of immigrants as illustrated in the research paper by Søholt & Lynnebakke of 2015. Similar to the findings shared by the earlier research, in this research most of the informants categorised their neighbourhood, by social distance, non-involvement and limited casual encounters, making it difficult for immigrants to develop informal relations with Norwegian neighbours (Søholt & Lynnebakke, 2015, p. 2330). It is lined with the statement of Cassiers and Kesteloot (2012) that local social networks and relations between neighbours promote the interactive integration at a micro level. However, in contrast, the weak connections with their Norwegian neighbours could be considered as a limiting factor for social integration of immigrants.

Likewise, in terms of friendship, this research showed that the majority (81 percent) of the informants did not have any Norwegians in their friend circle. Most of the informants said that their list of close friends is composed generally of their fellow compatriots. Nepalese immigrants seem to have very active and strong connections among them. There is at least one association of Nepalese community in Oslo, Trondheim and Alta. Generally, Nepalese immigrants residing in the respective cities are the members of these associations. However, many scholars saw the cultural difference between the members of the receiving society and the immigrants as one of the important aspects encouraging the establishment of immigrant organisations (Breton, 1964). Moreover, it is also evident that family and social connections were a major support for all informants and participants to enter Norwegians' labour market.

However, Bosswick & Heckmann, (2006) claimed that being confined to your own ethnic cluster might limit the immigrant's social and cultural capital needed for competing in core institutions of the immigrant country. In the same line, these networks might facilitate social interaction among Nepalese immigrants, but they do not enable their social interaction with non-Norwegians (immigrants other than Nepalese) and Norwegians. Thus, these associations have a very little role in informant's social integration within the Norwegian Society.

Mostly, those informants who had/have been studying in the Norwegian academic institutions, live in the same flat with the natives, had a family relationship with Norwegians or have been staying in Norway for a long period were more socially connected than others. They seem to

have comparatively more social connections with non-Norwegians and also have some Norwegians in their friend circle as close friends. All the participants of FDGs claimed to have strong and frequent interaction with Norwegians and non-Norwegians in their flats and surroundings (as they lived in student village). Eventually, they seem to have built up social connections with Norwegians. Likewise, it was seen that the immigrants who have a Norwegian as a family member build from marriage or relationship felt more socially integrated than those who had no family relationship with the natives. This could be as; these ties provide an opportunity for some massive exchanges of culture and give a wider exposure to each other's culture to both the Norwegian and the immigrant which obviously support to build strong social connections between each other's social networks (Spencer & Charsley, 2016). Likewise, informants whose children are at Norwegian school seem to have some social interaction with Norwegians through their kids' as some social connections are built through parenthood. Having children studying in Norwegian school provides parents opportunities to socially interact and exchange of culture with other immigrant/Norwegian teachers, children and their parents.

In terms of age, young immigrants seem to have a better social connection with the Norwegians because of the social activities they are involved in such as studying in school, sports, going for a party, enjoying weekend outdoors and so on. While, in terms of gender, male informants, preferred outdoor activities for social connections where there are more opportunities and possibilities of meeting Norwegians, while female informants were more inclined to events where there might be the possibility of meeting more Nepalese but have fewer chances of building social networks with Norwegians. Consequently, male immigrants seemed to have a better social connection with the Norwegians than that of women immigrants. Besides, a significant number of women immigrants' exchange of culture with Norwegians was mainly because of their kids or spouse. Most female participants opined that they are so impounded within their family and work that it limits their social interaction outside.

Immigrants are often blamed for *“not taking responsibility for their own integration by choosing to live in immigrant-dense areas and maintaining distance from the Norwegian community”* (Søholt & Lynnebakke, 2015, p. 2315). However, in case of Nepalese immigrants, they expressed their desire to interact and socialise with Norwegians. Some of them seem to have approached to have an interaction and build a social connection with Norwegians. The participants who lived in student village with an international student had relatively good social interaction with Norwegians and non-Norwegians. Whereas, some of the informants who lived

in the normal neighbourhood had frustrating and strange experiences of social interaction with Norwegians. A remarkable finding of this research was that the informants had more social interaction and exchange of culture with non-Norwegians than that of Norwegians. It is more interesting as the non-Norwegian consist of only 17.3 percent of the country's population (SSB, 2018a). Among the non-Norwegians, the informants mentioned having social connections mostly with people from South Asian backgrounds such as from Pakistan, Sri Lanka, India and so on. The cultural similarities with South Asian immigrants seem to have facilitated the interaction with them in Norway. Whereas, the cultural difference in socialising approach within Norwegian and Nepalese culture seem to limit their communication with each other. Contrastingly, in a multicultural settlement such as in the 'Moholt student Village,' where this difference seems to have attracted both Nepalese and Norwegians. It has provided them with some opportunities to understand each other's culture and enjoy the diversity among them.

In general, Nepalese immigrants have very negligible interaction with the Norwegians. Besides, some of the informants showed their lack of self-confidence when it comes to close interaction with Norwegians. The main factor behind this was their weak proficiency in Norwegian languages and their fear of being discriminated as a refugee (only in case of immigrants with a refugee background). Undoubtedly, language is a tool that facilitates the acquisition and transmission of information through social interaction within one's surroundings (Kaushik, Walsh, & Haefele, 2016). Besides, 'communicative competences' is a core element of cultural integration which is also preconditions for interactive integration (Heckmann, 2005, p. 17).

6.5 Analysing Identification

Identification indicates that an immigrant reaches a sense of belonging to, and identification with, groups in the host society, particularly in ethnic, local, regional and/or national terms'. (Bosswick & Heckman 2006, p. 9). I attempted to measure 'sense of belonging' Nepalese immigrants towards Norwegian society to measure their identification integration. Heckmann (2005), argues that the sense of belonging develops in the latter part of the integration process. According to the findings, more than half of the informants considered themselves as a part of Norwegian society. Whereas, almost 75 percent of them wished to stay longer in Norway if possible.

It is an interesting finding that I found in this study which conflicts previous findings. Nepalese immigrants were not able to secure a relatively better spot in Norwegian Labour market, their

social interaction and exchange of culture with Norwegians were very limited yet they had a high sense of belonging. In a deeper analysis, I found that that Nepalese immigrant who wished to stay longer shared basic three common characteristics among them such as; out of all the informants and participants, the informants with a refugee background; immigrants married to Norwegians, immigrants who have stayed longer in Norway were the one who wanted to stay longer in Norway. Besides, most of them shared more than one of these characteristics

I found that the informants with a refugee background exhibited a stronger sense of belonging towards Norwegian society. Some of them got very emotional and showed their strong attachment to Norway as their home and took ownership of the Norwegian society. On the one hand, they seem to hold on to their Nepalese identity, while on the other hand trying their best to blend into Norwegians society. This group of immigrants strongly stresses that they were all aware of the socio-cultural difference between Norway and Nepal and that it takes time to integrate. However, they seemed obliged to Norway for accepting them and were doing the best they can to integrate into the Norwegian society.

Similarly, as Ager and Strang (2008) argue that the sense of belonging is reflected in that family links, committed friendship, a sense of respect and shared values. In the same line, the informants who were married to a Norwegian or had more Norwegian friends or relatives appeared more attached to the Norwegian society. Besides, the strong relationships with Norwegians were enabling factors for these immigrants in their social integration in Norway.

Likewise, as Bosswick & Heckmann (2006) argue, the feeling of belonging develops progressively with inclusion, participation and acceptance of immigrants in core institutions of the society. In this research, the informants who have stayed in Norway for a long-time associate themselves with the Norwegians society. Notably, the informants interviewed for this research had been staying in Norway from at least 3 to 17 years. In addition, these informants were the leftover migrants in Norway who came to the country at different times and chose/managed to remain in the country for various reasons. Thus, their sense of belongingness is strong despite the challenges in their integration.

Astonishingly, most of these informants claimed to be a part of Norwegian society. Their claim was based on the arguments that they were legal into Norwegian system, they follow all the rules and regulation as a normal Norwegian do, speak a common language, have spent the majority of their youth in this country, have an attachment with the place and surroundings. Besides, they claimed to understand, like and adopt some of the characteristics of Norwegian society. In this regard, Heckmann (2005) has stated that integration occurs when the actor

identifies with the social system and sees himself as a part of a collective body. In this research, I found that some of the informants were accustomed to the Norwegian weather; have adopted and preferred Norwegian culture against Nepalese culture (such as; leaving their parent's house after a certain age, doing a love marriage, preferred Norwegian food and dressing style) however, all of them stressed the cultural differences between them and Norwegians. It seems that they are trying to find a fine balance between two cultures in their life. In one hand they were adopting basic Norwegian cultural elements and on the other hand, they were strongly holding major elements of Nepalese culture.

In addition, 'being able to speak the main language of the host community is consistently identified as central to the integration process' (Strang & Ager, 2010, p. 182). The informants who claimed to have strong Norwegian skills accepted that their pronunciation is not as good as of the natives and it is near to impossible or at least takes a long time to get that fluency and comfort. According to them, not being able to speak like a native Norwegian cannot be judged as weak language skills. To support the argument some of them claimed that they had obtained good grades in the university (courses taught in Norwegian) which show their claim was somehow true. Besides, most informants who wish to stay longer in Norway have worked on their Norwegian language proficiency. Interestingly some of them preferred speaking Norwegian (they claimed they are good at English, Hindi and Nepali) outside of their home. 'Norwegians speak Norwegian' and we also speak the same language was most of their opinion. Such a swing from home to host language is universally viewed as the key indicator of immigrant's...social inclusion (Remennick, 2004, p. 432).

Whereas, in contrast to these informants, almost all the participants and few informants wished to return to Nepal after accomplishing their goals. As mentioned, the participants in the FGDs consisted immigrants who have stayed in Norway for less than 3 years. Most of them thought it was too early for them to feel as a part of Norwegian society or position themselves in the social integration process in Norway. Unquestionably, the informants and participants also appreciated the Norwegian society and were amazed at the quality of life in Norway. However, they bluntly opined that there are more multicultural and international cities in the western world where social integration of immigrants is quicker than in Norway.

To sum up, the Nepalese immigrants in this research seem to have identified and acknowledged the opportunities in Norwegian system. The possibility of employment and attractive wages, better health facilities, free education, security, laws and order, and the Norwegian welfare system were attractive prospects to hold Nepalese immigrants in Norway. To be precise, the

informants, who have a refugee background, who finished their school in Norway, who have stayed relatively long period in Norway, and who have relatives and family were the ones who showed a strong sense of belongingness towards Norwegian society. These informants claimed to have adopted or internalised some of the characteristics of Norwegian society. Besides, the highly considered themselves as a part of the Norwegian society and wished for a long-term stay in the country. Whereas almost all the participants appreciated the Norwegian society but in contrast, most of them wished to return after completing their studies.

7 Conclusion

The study aimed at identifying enabling and challenging factors of social integration of Nepalese immigrants in Norway. The study is based on major questions; How do Nepalese immigrants understand social integration in Norway; Do they feel socially integrated into the Norwegian society; How do they position themselves in the social integration process; and what are the major enabling and challenging factors in their integration. Based on the analysis in the previous chapters, some major reflections are made to address the research questions.

7.1 Reflections on main findings

Interestingly, most of the immigrants seem to know the term ‘integration’ but their understanding was more inclined to the concept of ‘assimilation’. Besides, they seem to understand integration as immigrant’s moral responsibility to adapt and adjust to the culture of the host society.

In this research, employment was taken as an indicator to examine the structural integration of Nepalese immigrants. It was found that almost all the Nepalese immigrants were working but were confined mostly to menial sectors of the labour market. Only a few of the Nepalese immigrants, who have academic qualifications, skills and vocational training according to the market demand had secured better positions. While others, despite being overqualified, were working in menial works and seemed content with the wages. Social connections within Nepalese community in Norway and family was their strong support to get employment.

Similarly, social connections were taken as an indicator to examine interactive integration. Most Nepalese immigrants seem to be confined to their own community networks. In addition, they have some social connections with non-Norwegians while social connections with Norwegians seemed negligible. Only those Nepalese immigrants, who have a family tie with a Norwegian or were associated with them in the educational institution have a good social connection with Norwegians.

Likewise, Norwegian language proficiency was taken as an integration indicator to examine the cultural integration. Norwegian language skill not only affected the employment opportunities but also the social interaction with Norwegians and non-Norwegians. Due to weak Norwegian language skills, few informants expressed reluctance or showed low-confidence in initiating interaction with Norwegians. The weak proficiency in Norwegian languages and cultural

differences in socialising approaches were the major hindrance for Nepalese immigrants to build up social connections outside their own community in Norway. Overall, Norwegian language competency is the fundamental and principal mean to secure a place in Norwegian society as it directly influences structural, cultural and interactive integration of the immigrants. Likewise, Nepalese immigrants seem to have identified and acknowledged the opportunities in the Norwegian system. Besides, most of the informants involved in this study perceived themselves as a part of the Norwegian society. They expressed a strong attachment to the Norwegian system and place. However, Nepalese immigrants stressed the cultural differences they had with the host population. Despite taking the differences as a challenge, most immigrants seemed to take it an opportunity to experience and rejoice cultural diversity. Precisely, the informants, with a refugee background, who finished their school in Norway, who have stayed relatively long period in Norway, and who have relatives and family in Norway were the ones who showed a strong attachment and wished to stay longer in the country.

To sum up, the proportion of the Nepalese immigrants is smaller in comparison to the other immigrants in Norway. However, this small number is dispersed in different cities. Despite having more challenges than enabling factors to be integrated, Nepalese immigrants wish to live in Norway as they identified and acknowledged the opportunities in the country. Those who wished to stay seemed to work effectively on their Norwegian language skills to acquire and enhance their academic and vocational skills according to the demands in Norwegian labour market. Besides, they were also searching various ways to have an active and easier social life in the country such as; the presence of Nepalese community associations in almost all major cities with Nepalese immigrants is a strong example. However, contribution of these associations in the integration of Nepalese immigrants with the host population is negligible.

7.2 Conclusion

This thesis has uncovered that Norwegian integration policy, on one hand, is determined to work against racism and discrimination and on the other hand aims to promote a multi-ethnic inclusive society by promoting participation, providing equal opportunity, maintaining solidarity and tolerance (White Paper No.6. [2012] 2013). Except for a few issues, the integration policy seems to have facilitated the structural integration of Nepalese community as most of them had employment. Language skill is a major hindrance for social integration, but

the immigrants have tackled it by learning the skills. They seem to establish strong social connections with the members of their own community but only a few non-Norwegians. However, their interaction with the host population is negligible. They claimed to have a strong sense of attachment with the country, with its physical space and the system. But they don't identify themselves with the host population and their culture.

Based on the perspectives of Nepalese immigrant involved in this research, it can be envisaged that, within the Norwegian society, there exist two different social spheres. One consists of the members of the host society and another is composed of 'others' (with whom Nepalese immigrants identify). There is very basic and mostly a formal communication between the members of these spheres. Undeniably, without a good interaction and exchange of culture between these two spheres, social integration of Nepalese immigrants and formation of multicultural Norway is near to impossible. Nevertheless, Nepalese immigrants are relatively few, but they do add diversity to the Norwegian society. However, for a complete understanding of this diversity, an in-depth research on how Nepalese immigrants negotiated their cultural identity in Norway is required.

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