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Housing, Sense of Belonging and Introduction Program in Integrating Refugees into Norwegian Society

Case Study in Trondheim Region, Norway

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Norwegian University of
Science and Technology

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Urban Ecological Planning

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*no one leaves home unless
home is the mouth of a shark
you only run for the border
when you see the whole city running as well
you only leave home
when home won't let you stay*

*no one spends days and nights in the stomach of a truck
feeding on newspaper unless the miles travelled
means something more than journey*

*no one crawls under fences
no one wants to be beaten
pitied
no one chooses refugee camps*

*i want to go home,
but home is the mouth of a shark
home is the barrel of the gun
and no one would leave home
unless home chased you to the shore
unless home told you
to quicken your legs*

Warsan “Shire”¹

¹ Available at: <https://www.facinghistory.org/standing-up-hatred-intolerance/warsan-shire-home>

FOREWORD

This master thesis is about the integration of refugees, the Norwegian introduction program, the role of housing for refugees' integration, and the sense of belonging of refugees' in a local neighborhood. Through a case study in Trondheim region, Norway, the aim is to explore how refugee life and the designed introduction program for refugees granted asylum in Norway are linked and expedited to influence the integration of refugees settled in the Trondheim region. How does the integration of refugees reflect the outlook of the available opportunities, connect to the role of housing with integration, and answer the desired feelings of ownership and belonging in society?

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Trondheim, 14th of June, 2022

Atiqullah Faizy

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

I, Atiqullah Faizy, hereby declare that this master's thesis, focusing on Refugees Integration in Norway, is my own work. It is of utmost importance to state that the materials have not been published before or presented in any other module or program. The materials contained in this thesis are my work, not a "duplicate" from others. Where the knowledge, ideas, and words of others have been drawn upon, whether published or unpublished, due acknowledgments have been given. I understand that the normal consequence of cheating in any element of an examination or assessment, if proven, is that the thesis may be assessed as failed.

Place:

Trondheim, Norway

Date:

14th of June, 2022

Signature:

Atiqullah Faizy

STATEMENT OF ETHICS

I state that all information has been gathered with informed consent, following NTNU's ethical research standards. I have kept information anonymous by keeping data on separate hard drives, and this data will be deleted after the thesis has been submitted.

Trondheim, 14th of June, 2022

Atiqullah Faizy

ABSTRACT

Refugees and their integration in the host countries have raised significant global challenges in recent years. Despite its national scale, many obstacles towards integration effects will need to be managed locally. As a result, the attention to the integration of refugee into Norwegian society and its consequences has also increased at the national level. The integration of refugees is considered an essential instrument for an inclusive community.

Based on this research's findings, refugees' primary challenges in Norway are the language barrier, digital exclusion, and non-recognition of education documents acquired in their home country, resulting in higher isolation among refugees in many local municipalities. While the national government and local municipalities primarily acknowledged the need to establish an inclusive society in Norway are working hard to expedite the integration process of refugees in the local communities. One of the obstacles is the bureaucratic functioning of systems in governmental entities and a lack of guiding capacities to feed relevant information for refugees to plan education and career goals.

In this background, this thesis has sought to investigate further the claim that the availability and quality of the current introduction program might explain the limitation of refugees in the local municipalities. Therefore, this written thesis aimed to assess the designed Norwegian introduction program, the role of housing for refugees integration, and their integration and sense of belonging in Norway.

Seeking an answer to this, interviews are conducted with refugees who are entitled to the introduction program and their program advisors as the public officials involved in the planning, design processes, and implementation of the integration program in the local municipalities of the Trondheim region. In addition, the interview data is supported by secondary sources such as academic journals, introduction program documents, and official reports related to refugee integration.

The analysis starts by looking at how the Norwegian introduction program is helping refugees' integration, the role of owning a house for refugees integration, and establishing a sense of belonging by refugees' in a local neighborhood.

In conclusion, the research will dive into a more academic approach to determine whether the introduction program effectively addresses the integration challenges of refugees in Norwegian society.

The findings will identify the gaps between the refugees' needs, Norwegian society, and the available opportunities for refugees to integrate effectively. The research brings up real-life stories explaining why the current services have not addressed the integration needs. Proper guidelines during the introduction program's initial phase and internship opportunities in the municipal entities could expedite the integration process.

In the meantime, refugees who migrate to Norway are challenged with digital platforms. They need to know the digital skills required in the language school and working life and participate in all the digital platforms used in the hosting country. It might be crucial for enhancing the adaptation and integration of the target groups. Considering the findings from the interviews, the rapid digitalization of citizens after the pandemic crisis, and the more recent component of literature on integration confirm that improving digital capacity has an essential role in helping refugees be self-sufficient. It will significantly enhance refugees' effectiveness among Norwegian citizens.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ECRE	European Council on Refugees and Exiles
EEA	European Economic Area
EU	European Union
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IMDi	Directorate of Integration and Diversity
MP	Member of Parliament
NAV	The Norwegian Labor and Welfare Administration
NDHEC	The Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Competence
NSD	Norwegian Centre for Research Data
NTNU	Norwegian University of Science and Technology
SSB	Statistics Sentralbyrå Norway (Statistics Norway)
UDI	Norwegian Directorate of Immigration
UEP	Urban Ecological Planning
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	The United Nations High Commission for Refugees

1. INTRODUCTION

Lord Minto² said, “*divide and rule or divide and conquer,*” unfortunately, one of the main reasons for migration to a substantial extent is the internal conflict unwillingly going on in the countries with a more significant number of refugees. The proxy war of superpowers has become a business being executed in many global south countries, causing its citizens to flee the country. The consumer market of these superpowers’ big weapons production companies in the nations is experiencing massive conflicts (Hughes, 2014; Hintjens and Bilgic, 2019). Furthermore, other equally significant reasons people usually migrate are disasters, poverty, climate change, economic or cultural. The unprecedented refugee crisis in the EU in 2015 has widely recognized ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors. According to the European Parliament, ‘push’ factors make people leave their country, mainly because of things like war, while pull factors ‘pull’ people for better opportunities (European Parliament, 2020).

Like any other people, refugees and displaced persons have the right to integrate into society and deserve to live in or own adequate housing. However, in many places, including Norway, their conditions of residence in communal and private rental houses, usually protracted in municipalities where they have been granted asylum, do not guarantee this nor fulfill their rights. Refugees living in rental houses in many municipalities outlive their estimated period, implying that the right to live in or own adequate housing can be denied over a relatively long period in the hosting country. The final resettlement phase also undermines their rights, forming a marginalized minority. From the zero hours of emergency to their time of integration or resettlement, housing for the well-being of a refugee plays a fundamental role, and it becomes more like a luxury than a right. Being disadvantaged in the housing market can hurt a person’s health and socioeconomic status. While safe and stable housing contributes to better health, higher education, and work participation, effectively resulting in the integration process of refugees (Regjeringen³ Migration and Integration Report, 2022).

Most of today’s migration crisis concerns justify that most migrants are affected by being victims of superpowers’ proxy wars. The never-ending conflict, economic problems, and natural disasters are causing a high number of displacements, a high level of violence, and political instability. Migration and displacement of refugees from their home countries and their

² Lord Minto was a famous British diplomat and politician known for his ‘divide and rule’ policy by creating division among nations (Siddiqui, 2021).

³ *Regjeringen* = The government, author’s translation

housing issues in the host countries have grown globally (UNHCR, 2022). These are reasons that lead to migration and the need to search for new countries to survive and live in peace and prosperity (Hintjens and Bilgic, 2019). Today, being an involuntary migrant who had to leave their country of origin means starting all over, which often implies non-recognition of the education documents, functional skills, and qualifications acquired by migrants in their home country. This limits them from benefitting from good working opportunities. Pires (2015), in his article, defines this situation as brain drain and brain waste: “brain drain” is defined as the migration of high-skilled people from poorer to wealthier countries, usually by choice and voluntary, while “brain waste” refers to a downgrading of skills, where migrants end up working in occupations that require skill levels lower than those they had acquired in their countries of origin. Brain waste makes more sense in this research, where refugees against their will leave their land with no connection back home.

In this case study, housing will be defined as a place where individuals live in a shelter that guarantees peace, security, and dignity. According to the United Nations, the right to adequate housing and its links with human rights are interdependent. It can be a precondition for enjoying various human rights but should not be interpreted narrowly. The violation of the rights affects the enjoyment of several human rights that include crucial aspects such as access to the rights to work, health services, social security, citizenship rights, privacy, and education (UN, 2009). The interaction between human rights and refugee law is also highly dense, and human rights law considerably declares the very function of refugee law. From a systemic perspective, they have become so intimately interdependent (Rubio-Marín, 2014). Housing can be considered adequate when it adds to shelter, security of tenure, availability of services, materials, and infrastructure. It should be affordable such that it does not infringe on other fundamental human rights. It should be accessible to all persons with provisions for persons with specific needs and those marginalized. States are obligated to ensure an adequate housing system; however, the state is not obligated to build houses for everybody. It ensures that systems are in place to provide people the right to adequate housing (UN, 2009).

Norway is a welfare state committed to providing a wide range of free social services to address citizens’ basic needs and fundamental rights. The state is known for the equal distribution of high levels of public expenditure on welfare and income (Stamsø, 2009). This includes refugees with granted asylum to have equal opportunities and access to benefits. Public welfare administration is established to ensure everyone in Norway has a shelter to live in and food to

eat. The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) works with the directorate of integration and diversity (IMDi), which partners with a specific municipality and the Norwegian labor and welfare administration (NAV). All refugees legally recognized and received in Norway are qualified to be given a house for living in. NAV budgets the housing payment for the first three months for all refugees, and this support is complemented through social help. The IMDi has a grant for municipalities to implement introduction programs to provide basic skills in the Norwegian language, social studies, and work-oriented measures.

The goal of the introduction program is to contribute to how the individuals can make thoughtful choices about qualification, education, and work, and for the introduction program to be adapted to the individual's needs. The purpose is also for the introduction program to be more targeted and contribute to a more lasting connection to working life for the individual. Career guidance, among other things, is based on the individual's age, motivation, and wishes and looks at opportunities and limitations in the regional and local labor market. The career guidance can also help the municipalities better plan the introduction program together with the individual participant (IMDi, 2022).

Acknowledging the available opportunities that ease the integration of refugees into Norwegian society, this thesis seeks to explore what efforts are needed; all stakeholders should consider that in establishing ownership and a sense of belonging in the community. In addition, being a refugee myself, working with refugees in the Trondheim region and interacting with them daily during the internship and the fieldwork, using this experience as a resource for exploring their lives, was exciting to find out how the system is in place to fulfill their requirements. Of course, any elaboration on refugees was in regard with full respect to ethical consideration. This research has deeply studied the opportunities and gaps lacking in addressing the refugees' basic and fundamental rights to improve their lives as citizens in Norwegian society. Mainly, the study has focused on the integration of refugees in the local municipalities of the Trondheim region in Norway. By interviewing asylum-granted refugees, residents living in their neighborhoods with refugees, and refugees' public officials involved in implementing integration policies in the municipalities of the Trondheim region, the study has explored more details on housing, sense of belonging, and the process of introduction program for the integration of refugees. The findings can hopefully contribute to increased effectiveness of the available opportunities, identification of existing gaps that need to be addressed, and strengthening refugees' resilience concerning integration.

1.1 Problem Statement

While the integration program and other measures are very successful, some challenges remain, and there are still some scopes for improvement. Refugees in Norway are struggling a lot to start all over. This means non-recognition of the education documents, functional skills, and qualifications acquired by migrants in their home country. In addition, refugees are continuously living in municipal housing, not having their own adequate houses, and stressing to establish a sense of belonging in the Norwegian neighborhoods (Raanaas, Aase, and Huot, 2019). The central theme of this research is to explore the importance of the introduction program, the role of housing as an independent factor for the integration of refugees, establishing a sense of belonging for refugees to become part of an effective society, and overall the integration of refugees in local Norwegian municipalities. The research results will help us articulate the realities of refugee life and their integration into the Norwegian urban social fabric. Especially now when Norway is criticized for its strict immigration laws. Countries are enforcing supplementary laws to facilitate integration processes, and upgrading programs are taking place here and there; it is a good time to question the importance of refugee life and their integration into Norwegian society (Fangen and Vaage, 2018). Refugees are an undeniable part of Norwegian society, and the government must consider issues related to their integration. How could more be done relatively or done differently? Focusing on the quality of the provided activities will enable refugees to be fully engaged in the community and learn effectively. This will allow them to obtain needed knowledge and skill and establish a network to become active inhabitants in the settled municipalities. Giving the refugees extra attention is essential since they are the most vulnerable in Norwegian society. Refugees start at the bottom to create a new life in an unfamiliar country where their competence is not recognized. Due to a lack of language and cultural knowledge of the host country, they are often vulnerable to experiencing the loss of good opportunities in social life (Fangen, 2006). This thesis elaborates on facts and best practices refugees experience in the Norwegian society, particularly in the Trondheim region.

1.2 Purpose of Research

Refugees who migrate to Norway are challenged with integration and being part of a local community. Learning the language, getting an education, facing a society fully equipped with digital platforms, getting a job, fulfilling housing mortgage requirements, and supporting their family is an immediate and demanding start. In addition, it is often taken for granted that they should have the digital skills required in working life and participate in all the digital platforms

that their schools, children's schools, and kindergartens use. Refugee parents are expected to guide their children using digital tools (SSB, 2022). Overall, the research intends to explore how the integration efforts for refugees are implemented regarding their integration and how successful they are.

1.3 Research Objectives and Questions

The Main Research Question is: What is the importance of the Norwegian introduction program, housing and sense of belonging in integrating refugees into Norwegian society? How does the implementation of the introduction program acts as a promoter for change to improve the offered opportunities for refugees by focusing on the program's objectives? In addition, how do integration efforts by the state and the role of owning housing for refugees help them feel ownership and establish a sense of belonging in Norwegian society? In this case study, the main focus area is the Trondheim region, but I am also interested in having representative findings from the different regions. The central theme of the research is on asylum-granted refugees, their life in Norway, integration, the role of housing for their integration, and the designed integration program by the government. The aim is to explore how refugee life and the designed introduction program for refugees granted asylum in Norway are linked and expedited to influence the integration of refugees settled in the Trondheim region. How does it reflect the outlook of the available opportunities, connect to the role of housing with integration, and answer the desired feelings of ownership and belonging in society?

Objectives of the research include:

1. To explore factors related to refugees' integration concerning their education, employment, and cultural knowledge in Norwegian society.
2. To explore factors about refugees' experiences of integration linked to the Norwegian introduction program as the first and the basic tool offered for refugees.
3. To explore factors of owning a house and its role for refugee integration in establishing ownership and a sense of belonging in the Norwegian society to be part of the local community.

To answer the main research question, I have formulated the following sub-questions:

- Who are these refugees, and which factors influence the process of their integration?
- According to the professionals working in local municipalities and refugees enrolled in the program, what is the introduction program's role in refugees' integration?

- How do the refugees benefit from the Introduction Program?
- Which best practices related to the introduction program resulted in a more differentiated picture of the integration of refugees?
- How do the refugees understand the role of housing for integration?
- How do the refugees apply the integration program achievements and the position of owning a house in the local neighborhood in their practices to become active citizens?
- How do the refugees define their successful integration, feelings of ownership, and sense of belonging in Norwegian society?
- How could the government effectively improve the current introduction program?

The thesis will elaborate on the questions mentioned above that discuss the designed introduction program and the role of housing for refugees to be part of the local community interacting actively in Norwegian neighborhoods. Refugees as active citizens mean that they understand and can practice their rights and duties that link them effectively with the state and Norwegian society (Bergh, 2009). I introduce the settled refugees in the local municipalities of the Trondheim region in the following sections, with details about how the integration process is in place. The keywords such as integration, impact, inclusion, exclusion, and challenges are helpful to answer the main research question. The interest area as a case study is the local municipalities in the Trondheim region, and this thesis will contribute to studying refugee integration.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

I investigate the integration of asylum-granted refugees in local municipalities of the Trondheim region, Norway. The introduction chapter presents the problem statement, research purpose, objectives, and questions. The background chapter presents a literature review on refugees and the integration policies for refugees. The target groups' sense of belonging and the role of owning a house are elaborated as a constituent in their integration process. The theory chapter explores the integration of refugees, presents the adopted conceptual framework, and discusses the role of housing and a sense of belonging in refugees' integration. The methods chapter describes the methodological tools used in this research. The context chapter contains information about asylum-granted refugees, integration law, and the Norwegian introduction program for refugees. The case study chapter will present information primarily based on the shared data by interviewees during the research. The findings and implication chapter compares the gathered data with the conceptual framework of integration adopted in this research. Last

but not least, this research about refugee integration ends with concluding notes in the final chapter.

2. BACKGROUND

In this chapter, I will provide a literature review on refugees. According to Harley (2020), there has been extensive and increased attention on refugees since the establishment of UNCHR and the creation of the refugee convention in 1951. As refugees are the starting point, I will first give brief background information on existing laws and the legal definitions of key terms. This will hopefully contribute to a proper understanding of the key concepts used on refugees to address the status of the classified people. I will also discuss refugee integration policies’ common features and implications. There are several reasons why refugees leave their country to seek asylum in foreign countries, and these will be presented. I talk about the notions of belonging and citizenship in refugees’ integration. Then, I present the role of housing for refugees’ successful integration and how owning a house is perceived by refugees. In the last part of this chapter, I present the summary of studies, evaluation reports, and experiences with the Norwegian introduction program.

Statistics as of mid-2021 records show that about 84 million exist as forcibly displaced people worldwide, 48 million IDPs, 26.6 million refugees, and 4.4 million asylum-seekers population registered. The countries with the greatest number of refugees are the Syrian Arab Republic, 6.8M, Venezuela, 4.1M, Afghanistan, 2.6M, South Sudan, 2.2M, and Myanmar, 1.1M. With 3.7 million and Colombia with 1.7 million, Turkey hosts the highest number of refugees (UNHCR, 2022). According to the Norwegian statistics bureau report, as of May 2021, the total number of refugees and family members of refugees living in Norway is 240239 persons (SSB, 2021).

Category	2021
Western Europe, North America and Oceania	1 072
South and Central America	5 525
Eastern Europe	32 601
Africa	75 286
Asia	125 755

Table 1 Country background of refugees and family members of refugees living in Norway. Source: (SSB, 2021)

2.1 Asylum Granted Refugees

International refugee law states in the historical perspective that refugees have existed since the late 14th century from the year 1492 when Jews were expelled from Spain and Portugal. Nations noticed the responsibility of protecting refugees in 1921, and the international community recognized the refugee issue that required a global solution after World War II. Furthermore, the law related to the term refugee is the concept of asylum being a peaceful humanitarian act in which the states protect a person on its soil. The 1951 Refugee Convention is a significant achievement that has developed the bases of rules and values for a far wide range of human rights for refugees (Lambert, 2017).

People decide to leave, and sometimes they are forced to leave their countries for various reasons. For instance, migrants choose to move to work, education, join families, and are entitled to have their human rights protected. These causes are often used as similar meanings while distinguishing them is emphasized as essential and helps us understand legal differences between migrant, internally displaced person (IDP), refugee, and asylum seekers. Confusing these terms leads to problems such as misunderstanding the legal definitions and status of the classified people for both respective populations. Therefore, refugees and asylum seekers are at risk of serious human rights violations and fleeing armed conflicts or persecution, crossing national borders. At the same time, IDPs are forced to leave their home but remain within their country. Asylum seekers seek protection and are not legally recognized as refugees, waiting for a decision on their case as long as their application is pending. However, every refugee is initially an asylum seeker, but not every asylum seeker will be recognized as a refugee. Once an application is submitted, the hosting nation reviews the received application of an asylum seeker and decides whether the respected person has to be given legal protection status as a refugee (UNHCR 2016, Amnesty International 2022, and Habitat for Humanity GB, 2017).

Refugees' significance has been a global topic since the establishment of UNHCR in 1950, the creation of the 1951 Refugee Convention, and the 1967 Protocol, evidence that refugees have had an important position and contributed significantly to the development of the mentioned practical efforts by the international community. These initiatives ignore the claim and misconception about refugees not being involved meaningfully in participating and practicing their rights and duties. The development of early refugee laws identified the value of refugees' recognition and enhanced the legitimacy of their participation in a diverse decision-making process. Contrary to the widespread belief that refugees are disregarded, their contributions to

drafting laws and conventions are considered significant inputs in their accounts. They have formed laws and policies that affect them as we advance (Harley, 2020).

2.2 Common Features and implications of Refugees Integration Policies

In general, most integration policy packages for refugees through the host countries offer support to help them maintain financial independence. The hosting governments support social assistance such as housing to live, equipment of housing items, medical checkups, language courses, and capacitating refugees through various intro courses. Due to various reasons, refugees have lost their connection with their country of origin. They initially have no means of income, so they are offered more state social assistance. They cannot return home because they are at risk of serious human rights violations and fleeing armed conflicts, violence, and persecution. The contents of the integration policies are often mandatory for refugees (Tran and García, 2020; Lillevik and Tyldum, 2018; Regjeringen, 2016, Lovdata, 2020). Successful integration is a goal that cannot be entirely ensured unless the participant actively utilizes the opportunity. Integration policies aim to provide the opportunity to initiate the non-reliance of refugees on state support. In general, European countries have restrictive refugee policies; Western European countries predominantly depend on the welfare state's survival (taxpayers). The integration policies have a significant discussion among policymakers and politicians (Hernes, 2018).

Integration is not just about capacitating refugees with needed skills but also about interacting with their localities' social environment (Hynie, 2018). At the same time, in its broadest sense, the goal of integration refers to inclusion, participation, and establishing a sense of belonging both economically and socially. Integration policies are focused on finding meaningful, stable, and lasting solutions for refugees. Policies require mutual interaction in which both laws and the commitment of refugees to utilizing the opportunities are understood effectively. The outcome of the integration policies is measured by how well refugees interact in their resettled local communities. Successful integration depends intensely on the public's perception of welcoming refugees' settlement politics nationwide. Integration policies respond to needs, costs, challenges, and distribution of services for the participants and can initially shape the public's opinion and attitudes towards refugees in local communities. The challenge of building a relationship for refugees with their local community is noted constantly in several articles. Therefore, the main challenge is creating a new community for refugees to integrate, where all are welcome (Hynie, 2018).

One of the main problems refugees face in Western European societies who receive refugees is the waiting time in the refugee camps during the asylum application process. It has been a down part of asylum policies of the hosting nations and has created significant challenges. Refugees stay several years in asylum reception centers waiting for a decision on their asylum application, which impacts later their situation of integration into the hosting countries, such as traumatic experiences on their mental health. This is a post-migration consequence that will be experienced after their resettlement, while their situation of mental health issues may have already existed from pre-migration. Spending a long time in asylum reception centers negatively affects refugees' mental health, reduces their confidence, decreases their chance in the labor market, and fails them to achieve expected results (Bakker, Dagevos, and Engbersen, 2014).

Acculturation is acknowledged as a process to be stressful whereby identity change occurs as a result of cross-cultural engagements between multiple cultures often associated with social and psychological problems (Phillimore, 2011, Sheikh and Anderson, 2018). Refugee studies express commonly shared issues, such as war experiences, persecution, risk of serious human rights violations, inability to return to their country of origin, and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In addition, the political situation in their homeland, mourning the death of loved ones, and the worry about the remaining family members and close relatives affect their well-being when they cannot go back or are in no position to do something about it (Phillimore, 2011).

Although refugees have lost their connection with their country of origin in many cases, some still have the chance to support loved ones by sending money. Lindley (2009) acknowledges that “refugees are not just political victims and aid recipients but also economic actors.” Refugees are resources and send money back home to support loved ones; this often requires many challenges to cope with, such as worry for the welfare of close families, hard-working long hours in low-paid jobs, and buying cheap food to save money.

2.3 Belonging and Citizenship for Refugees

In the book ‘Citizenship and social class’, the module title by Marshall and Bottomore that was introduced in (1992) defined civil, political, and social elements of citizenship. They talk about three essential aspects: civil rights, political rights, and social rights. According to them, what

is meant by citizenship? What is the role between state and society in this whole formulation of the citizenship concept they divided into three parts? Mainly, the discussion about refugees' civil rights and social rights in the initial integration phase will be more relevant to discuss the integration of refugees in host countries. The civil aspect of citizenship and social class is a person's wide range of individual freedom. The social part is meant to have economic welfare and security to live life as a civilized person in society. The political involvement of refugees in exercising their political rights would not be relevant because the needed legitimacy to fulfill the requirement takes a couple of years (Ibid, 1992).

Yuval - Davis, (2007, p. 562. 563), in her article, discusses T.H Marshall's definition of citizenship and belonging ("*full membership in the community with all its rights and responsibilities.*"). She argued that minority groups such as refugees and migrants are probably affected by this definition, although rights and responsibilities shape people's lives. She also criticized the notion of permanent citizenship status gained by refugees being vulnerable and can be withdrawn at any time by the hosting states. Furthermore, in her paper on intersectionality, citizenship, and contemporary politics of belonging, Yuval-Davis quoted about "*the cricket test*' of the minister Norman Tebbit during the 1980s under the conservative government of Margaret Thatcher" (p.210). She cites the example of Norman Tebbit about 'cricket match' and Enoch Powell on 'West Indians' about people with refugee backgrounds stating the differences in belonging and citizenship. Watching a cricket match between the host country (Britain) and the team of their family originated country is cheered. In this argument, referring to the example mentioned above as cultural makers, Norman Tebbit claimed such people do not belong to Britain. The second example is from Enoch Powell, who argued that "*the West Indian does not become an Englishman by being born in England*" (p.210). In Powell's "rivers of blood" speech on 20 April 1968, the conservative MP was too much pessimistic about the foreign cultures overtaking British communities, the identity, and integration of immigrants from the former British colonies (Whipple, 2009, Katwala, 2018, Ballinger, Rutter, and Katwala, 2019).

Yuval - Davis, (2006, p. 197) mentions the importance of differentiating between belonging and the politics of belonging, and she defines "*belonging is about emotional attachment, about feeling 'at home' and feeling safe. Belonging can be an act of self-identification or identification by others in a stable, contested or transient way.*" In the studies of Crowley

(1999) and Anderson (1991), as quoted in Yuval-Davis (2006, p. 204), Crowley defined the politics of belonging as “*the dirty work of boundary maintenance*’ that separates the world population into ‘us’ and ‘them.’” Anderson described nations as “*imagined communities because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.*”

Additionally, Yuval-Davis (Ibid, 2006) says the politics of belonging also includes struggles around determining what is involved in belonging, the sense of belonging, and being a community member. What roles do specific social locations and descriptions of identity play in this concerning the participatory dimension of citizenship and membership entails?

2.4 Housing and Integration for Refugees

What is integration? According to Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas (2016), integration is defined as “*the process of becoming an accepted part of society.*” Integration for refugees is a process of settlement, interaction, knowing institutions in the society, establishing a network with groups and individuals, finding a job, and becoming recognized and accepted within the host society in their local community. Integration is the inclusion and acceptance of individuals in a society which is a generation-lasting process in already existing social systems. The legal concepts of integration consist of citizenship rights, while the main ideas of cultural dimensions are adaptation, acculturation, and assimilation. Furthermore, they referred to three main dimensions of integration: legal-political, socio-economic, and cultural-religious. The dimensions correspond to three main integration process factors: the state, the market, and the nation. Integration is a “*two-way process*” between refugees and the hosting community that requires interaction from the host society so that the host society is involved and does not remain unaffected (Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas, 2016, p. 11, 14).

What is housing? Which role does housing play, among other factors, in the integration of refugees in Norway? Housing is a physical structure that provides shelter, a basic human need at its most basic level. Refugees as low-income households face additional obstacles and issues such as language barriers; facing a digitalized and developed society with its new culture has a lot to say in accessing housing solutions. Upon arrival in the host country, they usually have no financial resources, local friends, and relatives in a critical economic situation to support them or even depend on their immediate support. Policymakers understand the essentialness of housing for refugees’ physical and mental well-being. Their access to affordable, safe, and

good-quality housing expedites the integration process. Accessible to amenities, affordability, a sense of belonging to secure emotional attachment of refugees, and the location of houses in high-income neighborhoods addressing public means of transportation is considered a meaningful sign of integration (Murdie, 2008).

Suitable housing accelerates and facilitates the successful integration of refugee household members, improves family lives, and improves their children's educational performance. The factors mentioned above positively impact reducing the length of the integration process and sustaining the long-term financial independence of refugees. However, housing is considered an important factor linked to refugees' integration, yet it, on its own, lacks a comprehensive tool to fulfill the need of refugees. Social integration of refugees through housing in a dispersed settlement needs to be integrated with other policy sectors to establish a complete package (Carter and Polevychok, 2004).

Housing has been a critical dimension for refugees' successful integration, and access to decent, safe, secure, and affordable accommodation can impact their relationships within their local living community. The more refugees live in a community, the better they understand housing as a prioritized need to express specific means of requirement. However, refugees generally lack academic knowledge of complex broader terms that I referred to in this research's theories, such as integration, belonging, security, etc. Still, most of them can explain situations based on their interpretation (Phillips, 2006).

In the case of this research, Maslow's motivational theory on the "hierarchy of needs" can be relevant in discussing the refugees' situation. The pyramid consists of five different needs: physiological, safety, love and belongingness (social), esteem, and self-actualization. According to Maslow, these needs can be individual and flexible based on various factors, helping people find the meaning of life and things that could make their lives purposeful. For instance, refugees can prioritize their needs by setting up some goals to integrate effectively into a new country, such as learning the language, education, employment, managing the stress of acculturation of the host country, building networks, and how the system functions. In his theory, starting from the bottom of the pyramid and then moving to the top, he calls physiological needs first and foremost, while the rest of the four needs become secondary (McLeod, 2007, Lonn and Dantzler, 2017).

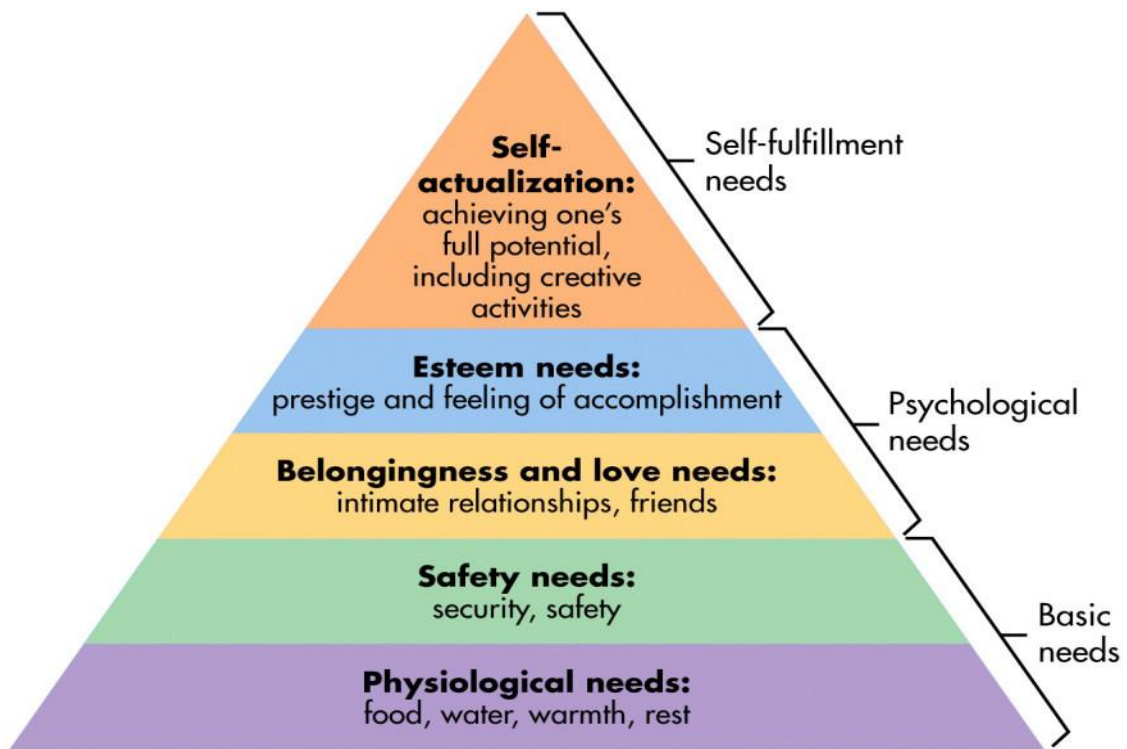


Figure 1 The importance of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Source: (McLeod, 2007)

For Maslow, people start with basic physiological needs essential for survival, such as breathing, food, water, warmth, shelter, clothing, comfort, procreation, and rest. The second level is safety needs when physiological needs are satisfied. Safety needs means to have security and protection from dangerous physical and social elements maintaining stability and freedom from fear of any threats. Then we enter the social needs domain, the third level in the hierarchy of human needs to be part of groups having belongingness, love, friendship, intimacy, and a sense of connection to maintain interpersonal relationships that motivate people's behavior. After a sense of belonging and love level in the pyramid is fulfilled, esteem and respect are required, such as recognition, self-respect, esteem for others' status, reputation, confidence, and freedom. Finally, self-actualization needs are about realizing personal potential, self-accomplishments, natural talents, and the desire to become everything one is capable of becoming (McLeod, 2007).

Conflicts, violence, persecution, discrimination, torture, and many more reasons make thousands of people seek asylum to live safely in other countries. When an asylum seeker's application is approved, a program advisor will be assigned to frame individual plans to proceed effectively with refugees, helping them achieve the objective of the particular plan. Program

advisors play an essential role in identifying and prioritizing refugees' needs. Using Maslow's hierarchy of needs will be a relevant tool to provide a realistic and practical framework for program advisors who work with refugees (Lonn and Dantzler, 2017).

2.5 Evaluation Reports, Studies, and Experiences with the Norwegian Introduction Program

A chance to qualify – experiences with the introductory program for refugees

This report by Lillevik and Tyldum (2018) summarized the outcomes of a survey done on the introductory program for refugees in Norway. The participants were 38 refugees, nine teachers, program advisors, and principals. The participants were from four north, south, east, and west Norway municipalities. The survey aimed to realize the opportunities and experiences of the participants.

Individual adaptation, program advisors, and user co-determination

After being granted refugee status in Norway, the participants need significant information and guidance about what they should do. Program advisors in the introductory program are there to do just that. The advisors play an essential role, as they can potentially lead the participants to the Norwegian job market.

According to the study, the participants have shown a difference in opinions about how the advisors helped them. The advisors need to design individual plans, and an advisor's knowledge, opportunities, and resources may deviate on how big or small the plan is. Participants are entitled to individual programs based on their background, skills, and qualifications, but this report showed very few variations between the individual plans. The plans were not adapted to individual needs. These results varied from municipality to municipality, as each has different resources and options, such as training courses and educational facilities. The options and plans that an individual gets determine what kind of job sector they can aim for. Furthermore, some may wish to get higher education instead of getting jobs. Therefore, the advisors need to know how the individual can achieve what they are envisaging.

Participants with high ambitions reported that their program consisted of only learning the language and being placed in work requiring no skills. The program consists of full-day activities, but not all full-day activities are relevant or helpful, depending on each municipality's

resources. Therefore, some participants thought that the full-day program was not meaningful and did not necessarily help them achieve their goals faster. Moreover, some thought that their advisors forced them into attending courses that were not beneficial for them, and this action did not encourage their learning. Nonetheless, some participants were happy with their program plans and were progressing successfully. The study shows that creating individually adapted plans is the best way to make the introductory programs successful.

Training in Norwegian language and social studies

The participants are well aware of how language is the main element in getting a job and integrating into society; therefore, the participants found the time spend in the program beneficial. However, many participants felt that the training was too difficult, while others found it too slow. This is mostly due to being in a class with a diverse background of people with different skills and qualifications that affect learning outcomes and motivations.

Qualification through work placement

Work placement in the program is considered beneficial and motivating for many, as it is an easy way to learn the language, meet potential employers and integrate into society. However, the participants felt that the work placements did not match their skills and expectations. Many works did not require speaking in Norwegian, and many were unskilled jobs. In addition, some participants have also been exploited with more labor, no pay, or false promises of future employment. The participants who landed jobs through work placements initially started as part-time or on-call workers. These jobs are important to the refugees as they lead to an income and a Norwegian residence permit. Ensuring a residence permit in Norway creates security for these people.

Ten Years Experiences from the Introduction Program

Kavli and Djuve's (2015) report discusses the introductory program for refugees in Norway. The data has been collected over ten years.

Implementation

The report suggests that the program's implementation has been well overall but still faces some challenges. The main challenge lay with the courses conducted for a year with an individual program. The main reason behind this is the resources provided by each municipality. The program will also have fewer services if the municipality lacks services and

resources. In addition, program participation is low, especially with specific groups. As some municipalities had good existing systems, integrating this program was not so difficult. The implementation is not solely on the municipalities, but also on other entities such as NAV, housing offices, kindergartens, and education sectors.

Results

6 out of 10 participants have laded jobs or educations within 1-2 years of completing their introductory programs. Men showed better results, and younger civilians showed better results than older generations. People from several countries performed better, while some individuals from specific countries continuously performed lower. Having better individual plans, with aims towards employments showed better performances. The program advisor's capacity significantly affects how the results may vary. Personal contacts, qualities, links, and networks play an essential role.

Participants' experience

Many participants have faced unequal treatment and discrimination in the programs, which seems unfair to them. Some participants felt dominated, while others felt heard. Many want more contact with their advisors but do not know how to accomplish so. The full-day program also has different opinions. Some feel it is too much to take, while others think it is too little, and some feel it is okay. Most participants thought the Norwegian language classes were important, but they felt that they needed more oral practice. Four factors came up repeatedly while talking about the program, inadequate quality of teaching, more opportunities for work placement, work placement and schooling should be better combined, and give priority to either school or work placement.

Academic Studies About the Introduction Program

According to Djuve's (2010) paper, the introductory program impacts the actions and motives of the immigrants. The program increases participation in society and creates a smooth transition to work. This kind of method can be deemed as benefiting the individual and the society they are in. Initially, the integration policy believed in giving everyone equal treatment, but now, it has shifted its work towards more treatments according to skills, social networks, and gender equality. This has led to better results of integration into Norwegian society. Other Scandinavian countries also have similar introduction programs, but they are not identical enough to be used on one another. In Denmark, the participants have less access to jobs than

the majority of the population. Participation in the introductory program is not optional in Sweden, and many municipalities do not offer the program either. This lacking of power creates a shift in the overall state of the citizens. Refugees have fewer opportunities than the residents, leading to less involvement in the program. Therefore, proper integration programs should be implying measures that help the people. If an inefficient program occurs, it may instead lead to segregation, exclusion, and poverty.

Djuve's (2011) paper suggests that the introductory program for refugees is one of the most important reforms by the Norwegian government. The introductory act states new ideas about citizenship and how it can be achieved. The program highly depends on the individual's participation, as they will eventually enter the job market and vote for political parties. Additionally, being integrated into the society has shown less exclusion and more trust between the immigrants and the population.

The paper by Djuve and Kavli (2019) shows that it is a difficult task to integrate non-western refugees into the Norwegian labor market. Furthermore, participants lack the motivation to join the labor market due to the strict disciplines related to working; the introductory program itself often lacks quality, which might result in such thinking. Across Europe, integration programs have become a big industry, as it leads participants to jobs. However, the program has some challenges, such as creating programs according to each target group. As Norway has a good wage system, and even 'low-grade' jobs have high-paying salaries, it is difficult to get a job without formal education, creating difficulty for refugees. Policymakers, however, are not bothered by this, as they are more concerned with the number of votes they will get after the refugees have become citizens. The difficulty or failure of refugees trying to land a job is usually blamed on the individual himself, claiming they did not have enough motivation. But policymakers need to go deeper to find if there are problems with the program itself, which might need mending. Finally, the government will give formal education more priority in the integration program shortly.

Valenta and Bunar's (2010) analyze the differences in the refugee integration policies between Norway and Sweden. Their integration policy is intertwined with housing and employment. After completing the program, residents might integrate into the society easily, but the differences between the refugees and the citizens at the beginning of their journey are vast and have not been solved yet. Policymakers must revise their policies to understand the refugees

and general population better. Both these countries have state-sponsored programs, unlike any other European country. The refugee integration policies in these countries have better welfare policies, and as the paper quoted the example of Korac's comparative research study on refugees that other countries such as Italy often deny access to specific groups of people from Balkan countries employment and assistance. The Norwegian and Swedish integration program did not occur overnight but needed time to reach this length. According to them, even if assistance and training are up to the mark, there will still be challenges in integration. In 2008, almost 10% of the population in Norway and 14% in Sweden were foreign-born. Over the last few decades, Scandinavian countries have received large numbers of refugees and asylum seekers worldwide. The most considerable number of refugees in Norway and Sweden are from Asia.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The goal of integration in society has multidimensional aspects, and it takes many efforts to become part of society. The concept of integration could mean opportunity, allowing each individual or different social group to interact and exchange views. In this research, the discussion of different concepts and theories helped me understand and narrow down the process of refugee integration in Norway. For instance, managing the stress of the acculturation process for refugees into the host country, belonging within a local community, establishing social networks, understanding the importance of owning a house in a neighborhood to make them feel at home, and many more to ease the process of integration effectively. This chapter starts with a discussion on the term integration; then, I describe the domains of Ager and Strang's conceptual framework. Lastly, I present the role of housing and sense of belonging for refugees' integration in becoming part of a local community. Integration and inclusion indicators are used alternately together and considered necessary for describing the situation of refugees. Integration is about the participation of refugees in various social arenas, successful settlement in a community, and helping them fit into society from exclusion to inclusion (Good Gingrich and Enns, 2019). Therefore, I bring together different concepts to discuss and explain how the refugees' integration process helped establish an inclusive community, sense of belonging, and become part of society. Ownership, participation, adjustment, being part of a local community, opportunity, marginalization, and many more describe the process of integration efforts.

3.1 Integration

Integration is a multidimensional and complex process that contains refugees' social, political, economic, and civil factors in a nation. Education, employment, and housing are successful constituents helping them engage and be critical at the start of the process. Practical and functional implementation of integration efforts helps refugees make valuable contributions to the local communities (Fyvie et al., 2003). No general definition for the integration term is commonly accepted. Still, aspects such as social networks, sense of belonging, employment, financial capability, and understanding of the right and duties are starting points (Phillimore, 2012). This thesis explores the conceptual framework of integration developed by Ager and Strang (2004 and 2008) to understand the relevance of the integration of refugees in Norway. Furthermore, the research will discuss the interconnectedness of the wide range of activities

and find out how they have effectively resulted in refugees' integration using the analytical framework of Ager and Strang's tool.

Formal integration means being a full and equal citizen, focusing on achieving 'public' contexts such as employment, housing, education, and healthcare (Ager and Strang, 2004). Contrary to what has just been said, even Norway has not provided a full and equal citizen opportunity for refugees as a prosperous welfare state. In principle, welfare states offer a wide range of free social services to address citizens' fundamental rights (Stamsø, 2009). In Norway, this includes refugees with granted asylum, yet integration assistance has discussed not equal opportunities for refugees and the rest of the population. The different versions of integration among the social scientists, such as socio-cultural, economic, and residential integration of refugees between refugees and immigrants, have not successfully preserved equalized opportunities relatively (Valenta and Bunar, 2010).

The refugee crisis is profoundly linked to the states built away from the reality of a nation. For instance, when countries are not prepared for a democracy created without considering nation-building bases, then it collapses rapidly. In addition, corruption, lacking legitimacy in people's eyes, unaccountable governments to the society, dependent on international aid, and respected political instability for opposition people make them seek asylum or flee the country. Immigration studies show that brain drain has negative consequences for any country (Murtazashvili, 2022). The immediate break-up of governments provides the ground for a flash flood of refugees. Challenges are associated with helping refugees in the refugee-hosting countries and the need to consider integration as a process of mutual responsibility among refugees and the hosting communities. Facilitation of effective integration for refugees has been one of the hottest topics. No unique common understanding is established, but hosting nations have identified specific trends that could constitute a successful integration process despite all the complexities (Phillimore, 2012). The concept and how people understand integration depend on interpreting their most identified interests. Education, employment, financial independence, and owning a house for refugees describe functional dimensions of integration for refugees (Castles et al., 2003 and Fyvie et al., 2003).

In the studies of Favell (1998) and Berry (1994, 1997), as quoted in Phillimore (2012), "integration is a central point that contains a wide range of processes where refugees are required to go through and gain needed capacity." Integration is a long-term process, and social

inclusion through interacting in the host society encompasses different identities where refugees have the influence to learn a new culture and keep their own. This is a vital discussion, especially for the refugee parents that are traditionally and religiously committed to the origin of their cultural values. Contrary to what Berry says, integration requires both hosting nations' and the refugees' adaptation to form new values and identities. As a result, in the long run, the most influential factor will be acceptance of the values of the present ruling system, which refugees in the hosting countries realize.

3.2 Integration: A Conceptual Framework

Ager and Strang(2008) elaborated on understanding what refugee integration means. They have identified the key factors that contribute to the integration. The output of their efforts resulted in developing a framework that describes key aspects of integration and their interconnection operationally. In the beginning, the central elements of refugees' successful integration constitute their access to education, employment, housing, and health services in resettlement settings. Integration courses such as (language, social studies, intro sessions, capacity-building training, and job search orientations) and their successful completion have a significant role in positively achieving the mentioned factors. There is a contrast between successful enrollment with obtaining the certificate and those who did not complete the integration courses. Integration means employment for refugees, securing an occupational status, financial independence, and maintaining the family's livelihood without dependence on social help from the government in the hosting country has a significant position (De Vroome, and Van Tubergen, 2010, Ager and Strang, 2008).

Education acquired back home and in the hosting country to get admission from scratch for a study program or plan higher education is a starting point and has a positive effect. However, studies show that education acquired by refugees in the hosting country is recognized significantly. In most cases, refugees face barriers regarding recognition of their educational documents and qualifications as refugees from their country of origin (Ager and Strang, 2008, De Vroome and Van Tubergen, 2010). Furthermore, mental, physical, anxiety, and depression are fundamental health issues among refugees, and health issues create many obstacles for refugees to integrate into the host country successfully. Experiences such as inadequate housing, loneliness, and family disruption are also frequently identified as health problems among refugees (De Vroome and Van Tubergen, 2010). Health is one of the significant issues acknowledged for refugees' integration. Refugees having good health guarantees effective

engagement, and their access to services makes them proactive; however, barriers exist in the provision of health services. Cultural perspectives, gender issues, and language obstacles to communication are considered problems in providing health services. In addition, some diseases, such as tuberculosis and HIV, should be recognized as serious health risks among refugees (Ager and Strang, 2008).

The conceptual framework describes ten core indicators that the authors suggested are essential for refugees' integration. The authors organized these indicators into four main domains: Markers and Means, Social Connection, Facilitators, and Foundation. The thesis will comment on each domain presented to show their relevance and determine how they are connected. For instance, in the first domain of this conceptual framework (markers and means), we have four sub-domains: employment, housing, education, and health. The indicators in the markers and means domain are considered functional; viewed as a means to accomplish integration, and refugees' projected outcome is regarded as markers of integration (Ager and Strang, 2004, 2008, and Phillimore, 2012). Ager and Strang's indicator discusses the physical condition of adequate housing and its effect on refugees' emotional well-being, helping them to feel at home. Contrary to what has just been mentioned, I do not discuss the house structure in this research, while the focus is on finding out what role refugees' owning a house possess for their integration.

The review of these potential indicators highlighted refugees' integration in Europe as full and equal citizens being fundamental. The starting point of Ager and Strang's conceptual framework was inspired by the UN Refugee Convention (1951), which assures the description of a minimum standard of rights for refugees. The 1951 refugee convention provided a clear definition of the terms and the rights granted under the convention (Robinson, 1952). The main focus of this thesis is refugees in Norway, a country with one foot in and one foot out of the European Union, the agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA), and all their politics, from the environment to economics, dominantly affected by the EU actions (Erdal, Doeland, and Tellander, 2018 and EU-EEA, 2021). The integration program in Norway starts with a particular focus on education and employment, helping refugees learn the Norwegian language and enter the job market (IMDi, 2022). Along the way, housing and owning a house by a refugee is the prime goal. Therefore, integration in a broader sense is a goal, while other supplementary efforts ease the integration process.



Figure 3.2 A Conceptual framework defining core domains of integration (Ager and Strang, 2008, p. 170).

Then the second domain of the proposed framework discusses Social Connection, which is described in three sub-areas of the social bridge, social bonds, and social links. These are also fundamental for refugees to establish social networks in the Norwegian neighborhoods that facilitate good employment opportunities and share cultural practices. Social connections promote foundational principles of rights and citizenship for refugees and lead the integration process for refugees within their local community, but this must be considered as mutual interaction. The relationships between groups with shared values, friendships, and connections with people create a sense of belonging in a community (Ager and Strang, 2008).

For Refugees, integration means being functional with taking practical actions, such as interacting socially with the broader community and expecting acknowledgment as social actors in the society (Korac, 2003). However, the theory of human and social capital is not the discussion of this research, though having social contacts, making friends, and membership in volunteer organizations can positively affect refugees' integration. These can be an excellent start to engaging in the labor market (De Vroome and Van Tubergen, 2010). For instance, one can prepare hundreds of good CVs and motivation letters, but in the end, having a network knowing people through friends creates a wonderful opportunity.

Social bridges are regarded as the relationship and the participation of refugees in the community in their locality. Through cultural interaction, they remove limited outdated visions of traditional thoughts and use opportunities positively. Through cultural exchanges, they have the chance to develop and learn from a different culture. Refugees would have to adapt to this and leave their limited outdated visions of habits and thoughts behind that do not comply with the hosting country's way of life, using opportunities positively. Assimilation and adapting to the hosting nation's standards requires time but happens eventually. People being friendly with refugees, respecting them, making them feel at home and secure, and creating a sense of belonging are additional characteristics of successful integration. Some refugees are tied deeply to cultural and religious tendencies. These interests are maintained through valued closeness with a like-ethnic group and family members, enabling them to practice cultural values and keeping relationships contributing towards effective integration.

Furthermore, this has helped them strengthen and maintain customs and religious beliefs, speak their native language, celebrate their national festivals, and exchange news from their home country. Maintaining a good relationship in the local community, practicing, and sharing cultural values have been described as a means of effective integration inputs. Mainly, it is essential for refugees as individuals to understand the structure of the state and the services provided by the government. The social links refer to refugees' lack of familiarity with system functions and language barriers that require more effort while connecting them to services that support the integration process (Ager and Strang, 2008, and Grzymala-Kazlowska, and Phillimore, 2018).

The third domain of the framework is Facilitators, which is complemented by two sub-topics: language and cultural knowledge and safety and stability. Language proficiency will positively affect refugees' economic integration allowing them to enter the labor market. Language and cultural awareness about the hosting country are the main obstacles refugees struggle with and prevent their confidently engaging (Ager and Strang, 2008; De Vroome and Van Tubergen, 2010; and Phillimore, 2012). Safety and stability are other indicators of this domain. These areas are one of the central focuses of this research to find out about refugees' sense of belonging and ownership in the local Norwegian community. This is similar to the two-way integration process (Ager and Strang, 2010) discuss, which is reciprocal interaction demands both hosting societies and the refugees' efforts and includes easing refugees' situation feeling at home, peaceful, safe from persecution and harassment in their localities.

Domain number four is Foundation, which discusses Rights and Citizenship. For asylum-granted refugees, most of the opportunities are equally distributed. The moment a refugee is entitled to a personal number, they are fully registered in the system and privileged by the facilities of the Norwegian welfare state. If there are shortcomings to obtaining full advantage of the available privileges, this will be solved along the way once the refugees meet some of the criteria to be eligible. The fulfillment of conditions such as sufficient income guarantees that refugees can obtain Norwegian citizenship, and there are different rules for applying for Norwegian citizenship (UDI, 2022). In the studies of Saggar (1995), Duke et al. (1999), O'Neill (2001), and Baneke (1999), as quoted in Ager and Strang (2008), the definition of integration and the concept of citizenship depends on the sense of identity, cultural understandings, and a country's independence as a nation. Full citizenship is perceived as the necessary condition for integration; civic and political participation is also expected. However, political participation has been of the slightest interest among refugees. Refugees' integration need adaptation to a new lifestyle or sense of citizenship, and citizenship shapes core knowledge of the rights and responsibilities of refugees. The mentioned points must be acknowledged mutually by governments and refugees. The contribution of different sectors creates successful integration for refugees, and the states can maintain the relationship between refugees and various sectors in the host community (Ager and Strang 2008).

“Integration of newcomers to a society takes place at every level and in every sector of society.” (Castles et al., 2003, p.113). Certainly, several units are involved in the settlement and organizing integration efforts for refugees in a local municipality of Norway. This needs many municipal entities' cooperation to communicate and work together. Among these government institutions, the refugee settlement office and NAV will lead the process where volunteer organizations will offer language and cultural backgrounds welcoming the newly arrived refugees to feel at home (IMDi, 2022).

In general, the domains and the ten key identified indicators are interconnected, and together they successfully generate the integration process for refugees. Therefore, social connections are built through employment, housing, education, and health indicators. The facilitation of these opportunities is maintained through indicators of facilitators and foundation domains such as learning the language, knowing the hosting nations' culture, safety, stability, rights, and citizenship (Ager and Strang 2008, Fozdar and Hartley, 2014).

3.3 Housing and Sense of Belonging for Refugees Integration

Housing is essential to developing a sense of belonging and is considered fundamental to successfully settling refugees. Housing facilitation is deemed productive in the integration process, which includes a social and economic adjustment for refugees (Ager and Strang, 2008). Housing is vitally crucial for refugees' sense of belonging, safety, and successful settlement. It is associated with family with a solid emotional aspect that is seen as a place where people have a sense of belonging, solidarity, and comfort. The construction and the house's surroundings have a lot to say about people's emotions, behaviors, social engagement, physical and mental health impacts on their identity and well-being (Fozdar and Hartley, 2014).

Sense of belonging and the role of housing for refugees articulate social identities and form ontological security within the society. To secure a sense of belonging for refugees in a local community requires a stable mental state, often referred to as ontological security, to establish a continuity with individuals surrounding, people, places, objects, and meanings attached to them. For refugees to be ontologically secure, factors such as consistent events that occur in a locality, having a positive view of their surroundings, and a sense of being accepted in a neighborhood give meaning to their lives. In order to achieve the mentioned aspects, the whole community needs to be mobilized. Being part of a minority or even marginalized group requires acceptance by the local community where you live, and people should welcome you. How are the needs of an individual met? What is the level of trust one could have within his surrounding? For instance, when refugees and the hosting country's inhabitants meaningfully interact with an open spirit in the environment in which they live, a sense of belonging is established, and trust is built mutually. (Skey, 2010, Fozdar and Hartley, 2014)

To create a sense of belonging and establish a relationship within their locality in a broader context, people express their concerns also about losing traditions and a sense of cultural belonging. This often directly affects their children growing up in the hosting country, and activities influence youth experience in the society. Owning a house and obtaining national citizenship with the fulfillment of eligibility in the long term possibly could establish a sense of belonging. However, in reality, being accepted as an equal member of society even with securing national identity has also been a controversial topic. Sense of belonging and feeling at home in a foreign country will be a continuous effort for refugee integration (Sime, 2018). Belonging is an emotional attachment relating people to the material and social worlds. Everyone belongs to a group, has cultural and social relations, and it matters for security and

recognition and has a nexus with citizenship. Citizenship status is part of everyday life; the passport is a material sign of citizenship and a mobility resource (Wood and Waite, 2011, Erdal, Doeland, and Tellander, 2018).

Integration efforts assist refugees in settling successfully and participating socially and economically in the community. These factors enable a sense of belonging to arise from having access to services and respected rights. Owning a house is a sign of belonging within a neighborhood, and it is associated with integration efforts proving that one is self-sufficient, fulfilling the mortgage criteria. Belonging to a society results from the first efforts for integration offered initially for refugees. When refugees are educated and provided the needed skill, they feel they belong in the host country, understand civic rights, duties, work, and pay taxes rather than receive social help from the welfare state (Fozdar and Hartley, 2014).

There is no doubt that the overall goal of integration services is to assist refugees in settling successfully, but there is also a discussion of having a sense of un-belonging. Theoretically, enrollment in the refugee integration program provides the basis for achieving goals if the program's quality meets the requirements of refugees and the efforts are utilized effectively. Of course, this dichotomy of un-belonging does not exist in the nature of government integration programs. Still, there is a manifestation of common sense among refugees due to a perception of exclusion because of differences in values, culture, and religion. Furthermore, the additional challenges are segregation, class, race-based discrimination, and the lack of a sense of welcoming and exclusion by the local community in everyday interaction (Fozdar, and Hartley, 2014). The essential elements of successful integration for refugees are having a family nearby, social networks, access to housing, employment, and a sense of belonging within their city. Being unable to secure mentioned aspect can lead to various consequences such as unemployment, stress, isolation, and poor quality of life (Hanley et al., 2018).

4. METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

The methods section explains the methodological approach for this thesis, and a case study is conducted in the Trondheim region. Refugees and their program advisors implementing the introduction program attended semi-structured interviews, and the thematic analysis was conducted after transcribing fifteen interviews. Trondheim region is the case area, and refugees provided asylum on a political bases make this research a case study. Case study and qualitative methods provide complex phenomena to conduct research with various data collection sources and ensure that the analysis is explored through multiple lenses, allowing several approaches (Hafiz, 2008). This thesis elaborates on these methods applied and the outputs of the findings. To fulfill the submission of this thesis assignment here in the methodology chapter, I briefly describe the use of different methods applied in developing the master thesis. The research provides rich information about refugees' integration into Norwegian municipalities' social, cultural, and physical neighborhoods in which refugees are in the Trondheim region. For the data collection, interviews, desk-based research, observation, and fieldwork are carried out. The thesis project was submitted to the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) and approved, fulfilling the ethical guidelines and procedures in the Norwegian context.

4.1 Contextualizing the Research

To choose the appropriate methodological framework for this thesis, the researcher is initially inspired by Aksel Tjora's book (2018) on qualitative research as stepwise-deductive induction. Aksel Tjora's book focuses on qualitative research tools, and this thesis's primary source also focuses on qualitative research tools. The aim was to see how to use Tjora's data collection tools by investigating the impact of the Norwegian introduction program on refugees' integration, the role of owning a house for refugees, and having a sense of belonging for refugees integration in the Trondheim region's local municipalities.

The aim is to see how the researcher can apply Tjora's data collection tools by investigating the impact of the Norwegian introduction program on refugees' integration, the role of owning a house for refugees, and having a sense of belonging for refugees integration in the Trondheim region's local municipalities. In this research, owning a house and having a sense of belonging for refugees are critical supplements to integration and are described as giving them reasons to make them feel at home.

The main methods for the data collection used in writing this thesis were interviewing, desk-based research, observation, and fieldwork, which started during the practice internship in urban development in the distinguished municipality of Malvik. During the internship, I aimed to understand the integration of asylum-granted refugees in the Trondheim region and learn and get practical experience from the working environment on how activity plans are done in the refugees' settlement office of Malvik Municipality. The initial coordination with the refugee settlement office in Malvik led to identifying and contacting the region's relevant municipal entities and refugees to interview. Therefore, this chapter starts by reviewing some methodological tools in developing the methods section.

4.2 Qualitative Research

This qualitative research is based on scientific values and guidelines developed from interviews with refugees and program advisors, field visits, document reviews, and observations. The study is oriented toward understanding refugees' views, experiences, meanings, and success stories, particularly concerning their ethical complexities involving the distinct vulnerable, marginalized groups, while reducing potential harms through anonymizing. For instance, during the data collection, I stressed confidentiality several times, talking to participants to ensure personal data privacy protection, which enabled refugees to express their opinions, and I meant no cause of harm in any way. The research draws on a study exploring the impacts of social networks, natural surroundings, and dimensions of refugee lives, acknowledging them as residents in a neighborhood worthy of studying with transparent, valid, and reliable information gathered through data collection methods (Fossey et al., 2002 and Block et al., 2013).

4.3 Data Collection

In qualitative research, social scientists have long relied on a wide range of data tools collected in several different forms. Qualitative studies are often consensual, and I have tried to use a combination of different approaches and sources of data to collect information about refugees (Axinn and Pearce, 2006). For example, primary data refers to the collection of data for the first time, and thus the information is new and fresh, especially for the designated study. The idea is to explore the links between refugees' social-cultural interactions in Norwegian society by asking specific direct questions to discover their unique and genuine experiences reflecting on the conceptual understanding of their interaction (BrainKart, 2018, Hox and Boeije, 2005). It is qualitative social research; therefore, the researcher used data collected for earlier purposes.

Secondary data is initially collected and compiled by someone else, whereas the information is used earlier by somebody or some agency. For instance, the Norwegian government IMDi and UDI, the two particular directorates, have been actively implementing the government policy and financing initiatives related to the integration of refugees. The researcher has reused the available data such as administrative records, statistics, and other accounts archived routinely by organizations to elaborate better on the main research question of the thesis. The introduction program, the start-up courses for new arrivals, and the statistics collected by the government of Norway relating to the number of refugees are acknowledged by this research as primary data since it has been collected for the first time. The researcher uses the availability of rich information for this study to address the details of a particular problem (BrainKart, 2018, Hox and Boeije, 2005).

The close interactions with refugees helped the researcher explore how refugee life is. This has facilitated the opportunity to document their experiences, best practices, challenges they faced, and success stories that positively affected their integration into their local society. The qualitative data collection and analysis approach is used to understand the research subject's details, complexity, and context to reflect on refugee life (Hox and Boeije, 2005). In addition, the research focuses on the reflection of refugees owning a house to explore the role of housing that has effectively expedited the integration process for refugees. The data collection is done through field visits, interviews, and desk-based research to understand the situation of refugee life. The study explores the sense of belonging, the role of housing in integration for asylum-granted refugees, and how the Norwegian introduction program initially addressed their needs.

4.3.1 Desk-Based Research and Literature Review

A literature review is conducted to obtain and understand an overview of relevant published documents, statistics, news articles, reports, and regulations on the given topic. The sources reviewed have helped profound realities of refugee situations respected internationally and in Norway over the years. These reviews effectively helped collect information about initiatives in the socio-cultural context of asylum-granted refugees in Norway and in general. The literature review is a foundation and very useful to help us understand our research. By integrating findings from the studies reviewed in many sources, we create guidelines, identify gaps, show evidence of the importance of the study, and build conceptual models to deliver a better result (Snyder, 2019).

The study of already existing material before any initial reinventing research efforts, for instance, the introduction program, integration laws, case studies on the role of housing for refugees, and refugees' sense of belonging, are used to understand refugees' integration situation. It was good practice for this thesis to shape a sampling approach supporting the development of relevant research questions and emphasizing the integration of refugees in the local municipalities of the Trondheim region. The literature review was open and relied on various data sources, specifically academic literature about refugees in general, online materials on governmental/international webpages, news articles and discussions of public authorities, and publicly available statistics. The researcher was also interested in reviewing literature that revealed interventions implemented by volunteer organizations for refugees. Refer to the context chapter of this thesis for the details of their activities. This is to discover how the efforts are recorded about refugees helping to ease the process of integration over time in the Trondheim region (Guerin, Janta, and Van Gorp, 2018).

4.3.2 Fieldwork

The fieldwork initially started during the course AAR5390 - Practice internship in urban development in early October 2021, and the data collection continued in writing the thesis in the spring semester of 2022. Accompanying refugee settlement coordinators in Malvik, the field visit began in October 2021; we then had to minimize our inspection visits to refugee families' houses due to Covid variant (Omicron) infection increased for some time in the region during December 2021. The primary data collection method was the observation, visits, and informal, unstructured interviews as casual conversation during the field visit (Cohen, and Crabtree, 2006). The field visits have been beneficial for me in understanding many interesting facts, for instance, refugees' first impression of being in a completely new environment facing lots of essential information to follow accordingly. Day-to-day record-keeping of field visits and observation is noted in a digital diary.

4.4 In-depth and Semi-structured interviews

As Tjora (2018) says, in-depth interviews, focus groups, and focused interviews are suitable qualitative methods to collect data. One uses in-depth interviews to study opinions, attitudes, and experiences. In this study, the in-depth interview helped me gather data on the cooperation patterns and how refugees and actors pool resources to help target groups in introductory programs achieve their goals. Later in this chapter of the thesis, the details of participants who attended this research have been described. The in-depth interview involves creating a free

conversation about a topic the researcher decided in advance. There is a difference between the in-depth interview and the surveys, which are used-close-ended questions in surveys, while open-ended questions are used in the in-depth interview. Open-ended questions give informants plenty of time to tell us more about their experience and experiences (Legard, Keegan, and Ward, 2003; Boyce and Neale, 2006; and Tjora, 2018). Through conversations with refugees, I listened to their life stories, experiences, and feelings shared about them in their own words. The interview methods used in this research shed light on refugees' opinions, concerns, hopes, and plans aimed for their families in Norway (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). For instance, conducting semi-structured and in-depth interviews was a helpful method for discovering the opinions, perceptions, and expert knowledge of interviewees who attended the research (Harrell and Bradley, 2009).

Some of the terms in the research topic are simplified for participants. They took the lead in sharing their experiences and stories, making it easy for participants to direct the discussion within their capacity. Mainly interviews were conducted with refugees living in Norway not long ago, living for a while, residents living in their neighborhoods with refugees, and municipal authorities working with them as program advisors. Refugees who have been in Norway for quite some time have elaborated insightful reflections and best practices they have experienced during their transition. The approved interview guide by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD), containing a list of designed questions for the research to direct the discussion in a focused way, is used in interviews (Fossey et al., 2002).

4.5 The Participants

The selection of interview participants in the qualitative research requires a set of purposive principles because our focus is to describe, understand, and provide reflections explaining people's experiences (Polkinghorne, 2005). The participants of my thesis consisted of refugees, program advisors for refugees implementing integration activities, and residents where refugee families are settled in their neighborhoods. Refugee candidates are mainly families granted asylum and settled in the municipality, categorized as living in Norway from 1 to 5 years. Their identity is anonymized, and I discuss this in the ethics section with further details. The program advisors are the policy implementers of integration activities such as the introduction program and intro courses. They follow refugees with specific career building and competence mapping developed before their enrollment in the introduction program contract. The valuable feedback

of inhabitants in the local community was highly appreciated to understand residents' perspectives about refugees living in their neighborhoods.

I included participants from Oslo, Kristiansand, and Stavanger regions to gain a broader view and representative findings from refugees in various geographical distances. However, most of the participants in this case study are from the Trondheim region. The views of participants from other parts of Norway enrich my findings of the Trondheim region. For instance, it has provided some comparisons, particularly in how each respected participant utilized the offered opportunities during the introduction program and how they interpreted the role of housing and sense of belonging for their integration. In this research, interviewees (1, 3 and 7) are from the aforementioned regions, while the rest of the seven refugee participants and the four program advisors are from the Trondheim region. For further details about each participant's reflections, see Case Study and Analysis in chapter six. During the interviews, I noticed two main types of asylum granted to refugee families: political and humanitarian bases. Refugees with political asylum backgrounds have no connection with their country of origin. According to IMDi (2022), refugees granted asylum and settled in the Norwegian urban and local areas receive similar opportunities such as housing, introduction programs, and language schools. Most of the refugee participants in the research were male; finding female candidates has been challenging recruitment. I did not find more female candidates, and only two female refugees attended this research, while it could have been interesting to discuss the details of my research. I tried to recruit as many female refugees to have a representative finding in terms of presenting both genders, and pointing to possible gender differences connected to their integration experiences would have been highly valuable to consider.

Location	Number of Participants	Remarks
Refugees from Trondheim Region	Seven refugees (one female and six male)	Seven refugees participated in this research, and they are referred as interviewees or interviews (2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9 and 10) in the following chapters
Program Advisors from Trondheim Region	Four program advisors	Four program advisors participated in this research, and they are referred as interviewees or interviews (11, 12, 13, and 14) in the following chapters
Other Regions	Three refugees	Three refugees participated from Oslo, Kristiansand, and Stavanger Regions in this research, and they are referred as interviewees or interviews (1, 3 and 7) in the following chapters
Local Resident	One resident	One local resident shared his perspectives about refugees living in their neighborhoods, referred as interviewee or interview (15) in the following chapters

Table 2 List of participants interviewed in this research and how they are referred to in the following chapters.

Furthermore, the decision to narrow down my selection of asylum-granted refugee families was initiated in early October 2021 in an internship course conducted in Malvik municipality. This was based on my work at the refugee settlement office, where I have learned about refugee families’ culture, background, and behavioral patterns in the Trondheim region. My general understanding of refugees’ backgrounds has made it easier to develop a further relevant section in the research. Important to mention that all the refugee participants are settled in the local municipalities and have been enrolled in the introduction program. Therefore this research does not account for refugees or asylum seekers living in the reception centers waiting to be introduced by IMDi to any local municipalities in Norway.

4.6 Confidentiality and Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues have generic indications in qualitative research, such as confidentiality, privacy, and unique stories shared by participants. Interview-based research can lead the researcher to explore unexpected areas, and it is difficult for the researcher to elaborate on complete information. Although informed consent legitimizes the attendance of participants in the research, it is the researcher's responsibility to maintain confidentiality and protect the anonymity of interviewees (Allmark et al., 2009). Personal data privacy must remain unknown and inaccessible; if not, it can cause inconvenience and harm to research respondents (Clark-Kazak, 2017). Refugees are granted asylum for various reasons; therefore, before starting the internship, I was asked to sign a confidentiality agreement with the refugee settlement office in Malvik municipality, where I was obliged to respect the privacy of refugee affairs. The refugee settlement coordinator stressed that I should be aware of the importance of working with vulnerable groups such as refugees, and breaching them would have legal consequences.

The research is carried out following NSD ethical guidelines, and the data of refugee families are protected and anonymized. For instance, the municipal authorities working with refugees have asked me to anonymize by making it more general and citing their reflection by saying a refugee from an Arab country, not from Syria. This way of anonymity is because local municipalities are small, and people will recognize the refugee identity. After the transcription of the interviews, the tape recordings were deleted. During the interviews, I stressed confidentiality several times and ensured the participants about using their data only for this designated academic purpose. I declared they could reach me anytime to discuss their concerns and withdraw from attending the research.

4.7 Data Analysis

To produce a core description of the interviewees' experience, the data material generated in oral form during the interviews is transformed into written text (Polkinghorne, 2005). In total, fifteen interviews were conducted during the fieldwork. Four participants in the interviews were program advisors; ten were refugees, and one was a resident where refugees are settled in their neighborhood. Two female refugees responded to the interview, but in one interview, both male and female couples attended in one instance. I have ensured participants about their data confidentiality. Therefore interviews in the case study and analysis chapter will be quoted as interviews 1 to 10 for refugees, interviews 11 to 14 are program advisors, and interviews 15 is the resident where refugees live in their neighborhood. All interviews took place in the

Trondheim region, Norway, in the participants' offices and meeting places the interviewees chose; three interviews took place in each of the following regions Oslo, Kristiansand, and Stavanger. The interviews lasted from 60 minutes to 1,5 hours. Interviews were recorded through the use of a dictaphone. Although neither myself nor the refugee participants were native speakers of Norwegian, I chose not to have an interpreter from the interviewees' native language. I was worried and did not want a third person to know the details of our conversation from the refugee's country of origin, which could compromise our interaction. Still, I managed to receive the needed information and asked all my research questions in the questionnaire without any shortcomings.

After I transcribed all interviews, I conducted a thematic analysis, which was a helpful method for this qualitative research to “identify, analyze and report the patterns (themes)” within the data to describe the data set in rich detail (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 79). The identified patterns were (1) the Norwegian introduction program and its link to refugees integration, (2) refugees integration in Norwegian society, and (3) how they understood the role of housing and sense of belonging for refugees integration. Finally, the identified analysis and patterns were related to Ager and Strang's (2008) conceptual framework defining core domains of integration.

4.8 Challenges and Limitations

While the research offers interesting insights about refugees' situations and opportunities regarding their integration into the Norwegian society, it is still important to point out its limitations. One of the main factors that affected the early start of this research was time, where I was supposed to begin working on my topic in mid-January 2022. Before starting the research on my thesis topic, I was enrolled in an internship course relevant to this thesis research question in the refugee settlement and city planning office in Malvik municipality. The assigned tasks given during the internship were comprehensive, demanding, and complex issues continued to finish the final report of the internship course until the end of February 2022.

Furthermore, participants' recruitment and interview agreements with refugees and especially the program advisors implementing the Norwegian integration policies for refugees in the local municipalities because of the recent war crisis in Ukraine have been very challenging. It was difficult for officials working in the municipal entities to find a suitable time in their calendar to agree on an hour interview. Although I was given the time to interview them a couple of times, and when I showed up in their offices, the meeting was postponed and canceled for an

unknown time. As a result, some of the participants asked me to share the interview questionnaire with them, and they wanted to write their reflections whenever it suited them. I also simplified the interview questionnaire as best as possible, writing extra details about each research topic question and trying to have casual conversations about my desired issues.

Last but not least, another limitation that affected the implementation of this research was the language barrier. The participants wanted to communicate in Norwegian, and also most of the documents in the local context were in Norwegian.

5. LOCAL CONTEXT

This section gives overall insights about asylum-granted refugees, the Norwegian integration law, the Norwegian introduction program for refugees, the settlement of refugees in a local municipality, integration efforts by volunteer organizations for refugees, and the available means of housing models provided for refugees settled in the local municipalities. It also points out the issues associated with the aimed goal for the designed introduction program by the national government and the implementation of integration efforts by the local municipalities. It highlights the situation of the asylum-granted refugees and how their socio-cultural conditions have been addressed. Apart from that, this section also explores the government integration policy and programs that refugees are enrolled in and have, positively or negatively, impacted the integration and socio-cultural aspects of the refugees. The chapter provides comprehensive information by giving a general overview of the abovementioned points on how the Norwegian government currently understands and deals with asylum-granted refugees. After giving this overall picture, in the case study chapter, the integration of asylum granted refugees impacted by the Norwegian integration policies will elaborate on the participant's interpretation of the opportunities received.

5.1 Asylum Granted Refugees in Norway

Norway is a country with vast geography with a population of 5,415,166 people. The government is committed to receiving refugees every year, and people from other nations add to the growth of the population while playing an essential role (SSB, 2022). The key actors involved with refugee affairs are the United Nations, the Norwegian government's UDI, IMDi, and local municipalities. The central problem in the topic is the issues such as language barrier, education, and employment, starting all over with digesting cultural perspectives and challenges towards integration. The research about the specifically mentioned target group will be a relevant contribution to the Norwegian government entities such as UDI, IMDi, and local municipalities. The particular target group in this research is asylum-granted refugees settled in the local municipalities of the Trondheim region. The Norwegian term of refugee interpretation's defined basis is taken from the UN Refugee Convention, and the authorities are obliged to comply with the UN convention. The provision of immediate integration services such as housing, learning language skills, financial support, and employment is the responsibility of the hosting country (Dubus, 2018). The 1951 UN Convention and the 1967 Protocol are the main legal documents supporting refugee rights. The convention defines a refugee as: "Someone unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-

founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.” The refugee convention created the legal scope of framework for UNCHR, and the agency serves as the guardian.

Furthermore, the convention describes the refugee as a person who has fled war, violence, conflict, or persecution and has crossed an international border to find safety in another country. They often have had to escape and leave everything behind, including loved ones. The convention has established international protection for refugees (UNHCR, 1951).

As a welfare state, Norway is committed to UN conventions, and The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) is mainly responsible for processing refugees’ applications. According to (UDI), “*a refugee is a person who meets the requirements for being granted protection in Norway.*” Mainly asylum seekers in Norway receive a residence permit if they are persecuted for ethnicity, religion, political views, skin color, or nationality. In addition, they are members of a particular social group or, on the way home, are in danger of being exposed to the death penalty, torture, or inhuman or degrading treatment and punishment. Asylum seekers are considered special social groups and are entitled to protection if they have a well-founded fear of persecution due to membership in a particular social group (UDI, 2022). When a person has applied for protection, they are called an asylum seeker, and no final decision has been made for their document. A person is only an asylum seeker from the time reported to the police in Norway until the (UDI) has considered the application and decided. As soon as they have received a final answer to their applications, they are no longer called asylum seekers. If a person is granted a residence permit as a refugee or based on humanitarian grounds, they can be in Norway; otherwise, they must leave if their application is rejected (UDI, 2022).

The most frequently asked questions are; what happens when someone applies for protection and how long it takes UDI to decide about an applicant in Norway. Unfortunately, there is no concrete answer to the questions. In order to determine how long an applicant has to wait, the answer depends on which country the applicant is a citizen of. UDI has different application schemes for refugees from each country. As asylum seekers, applicants have to wait a long time, and they can choose to go back home at any time. Some of these cases take several years, and asylum seekers are not allowed to work until they are given a residence permit in Norway. There are exceptions, too; for instance, the recent war crisis in Ukraine or if an asylum seeker comes with a passport. When asylum seekers have a passport, it makes it easy for UDI to create

an identity profile, handling the process faster. After you have applied for protection, you will be given a place at an asylum reception center and called in for an interview with the UDI. The UDI considers whether an asylum seeker should receive protection (asylum) in Norway. Having humanitarian considerations or a special connection with Norway is called a residence permit on humanitarian grounds. Suppose they have a passport, and most probably, it will be taken by the police during the interview to order the travel document and residence permit card. Refugees receive a travel document that states that “the travel document is valid for all except the country of origin” (UDI, 2022).

5.2 Norwegian Integration Law

What does the Norwegian Integration Law provide for asylum-granted refugees? Norway’s Ministry of Labor and Social Inclusion has prepared the integration law obtained through Education, Training, and Work. The central theme of the Norwegian integration law is that immigrants should be integrated into Norwegian society at an early stage and become financially independent. There is no unique definition of integration; however, speaking the host country’s language and securing an employment opportunity are considered essential in the integration process (Dubus, 2018). This law requires immigrants to learn good Norwegian language skills, knowledge of Norwegian culture, formal qualifications, and maintain a lasting connection to working life. The integration law under immigration law defines an asylum seeker as a person seeking protection, whereas an immigrant is a person with a residence permit in Norway according to the immigration law. The local and county municipality is responsible for implementing an introduction program that facilitates and qualifies asylum seekers/refugees to learn the Norwegian language and social studies. As a mandatory component of the Norwegian integration policy, social studies contain topics on local culture and provide survival knowledge for refugees on how Norway’s main governmental system functions. The county municipality is accountable for integration efforts at a broader level, including preparing qualification plans, recommending the number of refugees to be settled in local municipalities in the region, and providing career guidance and social studies (Regjeringen, 2016, and Lovdata, 2020).

Qualifying participation in training for asylum seekers over 18 years old is a duty to learn the Norwegian language and accomplish a minimum of 50 hours of social studies in the class. The local municipality enrolls refugees in the Norwegian introduction program shortly after a refugee’s settlement in a municipality. The ministry of education provides the training content

nationally, while individual plan preparation and competence mapping are done in the local municipalities. The integration efforts contribute to the settlement of refugees in a municipality with relevant offers of training skills, career/education guidance, and the introduction program will be adapted to the individual's needs. Refugees between the ages of 18 and 55 who have been granted a residence permit and reside in a municipality have the right and duty to participate in the introduction program. It is mentioned that this provision does not cover nordic citizens and foreigners covered by the agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA Agreement). An introduction program is an agreement between the municipality and the refugee. The municipality facilitates the opportunity for refugees no later than three months after their settlement (IMDi, 2022).

Based on integration law, the local municipality decides the duration of the introduction program, and the program ends when the final goal or duration is reached. The content and scope of the introduction program must contain at least training in the Norwegian language, social studies, life skills course, and work- or education-oriented aspects. The municipality offers an introduction program, training in the Norwegian language, and social studies in the integration contract. Some conditions that may justify stopping the introductory program include extensive absence, behavior that may impair the participant's or others' ability to complete the program, or severe or long-term illness. Suppose refugees are traumatized and therefore constrained in their ability to "perform" as expected. They are sent to the psychological health support system. The adult learning centers for refugees that offer language classes have special programs for traumatized refugees. IMDi has a grant for municipalities that can use to pay for extra services they provide. The law has foreseen many aspects to ensure that the introduction benefits are entitled to or reduced for particular reasons. The participant can apply to the municipality for permission to be absent from the Norwegian language and social studies training (Regjeringen, 2016; Lovdata, 2020).

5.3 Provision of Housing and Settlement of Refugees in a Local Municipality

Protection (asylum) means being granted a residence permit as a refugee in Norway (UDI, 2022). IMDi introduces Asylum-granted refugees to local municipalities in Norway based on their capacity to receive a refugee family and provide a housing unit for them to live in. All refugees legally recognized and accepted in Norway are qualified to be given a house to live in. NAV budgets the housing payment for the first three months for all refugees, and this support is through social help (NAV Social Assistance, 2022). The IMDi has a grant for

municipalities to implement integration programs to provide basic skills in the Norwegian language, social studies, and work-oriented measures. The goal is to contribute to how the individuals can make thoughtful choices about qualification, education, and work and adapt the introduction program to the individual's needs. The purpose is also for the introduction program to be more targeted and contribute to a more lasting connection to the individual's working life (Regjeringen, 2016 and IMDi, 2022).

To start with, the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) works with the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi), which partners with a specific municipality and the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV). Two main activities are done while settling a refugee in the municipality one before and the other after arrival. The moment the refugee settlement office receives notification via email about the arrival of a new refugee family, the office in charge starts preparation and communicates with specific entities in the municipality. For instance, the refugee settlement office prepares a to-do list (communicate with the housing unit to rent a house, buy equipment and furniture, arrange an appointment with the Trøndelag police county, kindergarten, school, hospital, NAV, and other relevant departments). Once a refugee family arrives, the settlement coordinators accompany them with the pre-organized appointments and the new orientation tours to the city for shopping clothes and issuing bus cards.

The provision of refugee housing is based on how new a refugee is in the municipality. During the introduction program, the municipality encourages refugees to be proactive, using the opportunity given to be independent. Refugees who have stayed longer tend to create networks that equip them to provide basic needs. About three housing models are available for refugees coming into Malvik municipality. The three models are 1. communal housing, these are apartments owned by the municipality rented out to newly arrived refugees. Before the enrollment of refugees in the introduction program, the rent of communal housing is paid by NAV. 2. sublets, thus, a housing complex owned by someone who allows the municipality to rent it out on their behalf, and 3. private housing where refugees need to rent their own accommodations and make agreements with the house owners directly in the open market. Housing provided to refugees is meant to be within high-income neighborhoods with proximity to amenities. Refugees are entitled to own a house with conditions such as a start loan with low interest and a long-term payback period. There is a housing social policy for refugees facilitating refugees to own a house (Malvik Refugee Settlement Office, 2022).

5.4 The Efforts of the Refugee Settlement Office

The refugee settlement team is responsible for all aspects of the arrival of refugees in the local municipalities. Every three years, the City council decides the maximum number of refugees that can be settled in the municipality for the three years. Each year the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) sends the local municipality a request to settle a certain number of refugees. Together with the office of the City Manager, and in accordance with the mandate from the City Council, the refugee settlement office decides on the number of refugees the municipality can settle each year (Malvik Refugee Settlement Office, 2022).

In most cases, the settlement office finds housing and furnishes it for the refugees; and for those coming directly from abroad, buy food items in advance that would be sufficient for the first few days. Upon arrival, refugee settlement coordinators escort the refugees to their new homes and teach them how to live in Norway. The first week is focused on practical things like operating appliances, purchasing clothes and food, and completing health checks, which are required upon arrival. The following few months, settlement coordinators spend helping them adjust to life in Norway.

This support includes but is certainly not limited to: getting their immigration status effectuated; starting school; starting daycare; getting a bank account; understanding the tax system; getting acquainted with other services in the municipality; applying for diverse social supports, both national and municipal; dental and eye care; a physical examination; updating vaccines they may have missed in their home country as well as getting vaccinated for covid; learning where to purchase goods and services; learning to use a cell phone/computer; starting free time activities like sports, especially for children; etc.

The settlement team aims to finish their tasks within three months of arrival, but due to various bureaucratic and individual reasons (such as health), they are seldom finished within three months. Their mandate extends until they have completed all their tasks or other services like school and NAV take over. However, they continue to guide all things related to housing until the refugees are self-sufficient. These efforts for refugees can take from two months to six years. The three-month goal is based on a requirement in the integration law that all refugees between 18 and 55 years old must start an introduction program in the settled municipality within three months of arrival (Regjeringen 2016 and IMDi 2022).

In addition to the settlement of new refugees, the settlement team manages all grants from the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) and coordinates services for those refugees with special needs or acute health issues. The settlement team also coordinates services for adults above 55 years old as the integration law does not cover them. Children aged 16 and 17 upon arrival are special cases. Education for children aged 16 and 17 is not a municipal responsibility, and since they are under 18, they are not subject to the integration law. There is no specific responsible municipal department for these children, but as refugees, they have unique needs that the state authorities cannot provide. Therefore, the settlement team steps in where children and young adults need help.

The refugee settlement team is responsible for the procurement of adult dental services and foreign language translation services and follow-up of those contracts through the contract period. Finally, the refugee settlement team participates in various fora with expertise in minority language communication and cultural understanding (Malvik Refugee Settlement Office, 2022).

5.5 Competence Mapping and Career Guidance

Before starting the introduction program for a refugee, competence mapping and career guidance are carried out to ensure that the individual receives a customized and targeted program. The skill planning with subsequent professional assistance is one of the first efforts that take place before starting the introduction program. Career guidance, among other things, is based on the individual's age, motivation, and wishes and looks at opportunities and limitations in the regional and local labor market. The career guidance can also help the municipalities better plan the introduction program together with the individual participant. Therefore, the career guidance should be completed no later than three months after settlement and before the municipality decides on the participation of refugees in the introduction program (Regjeringen, 2016; IMDi, 2022; Lillevik and Tyldum, 2018).

Certainly, competence mapping and career guidance is the first official meeting between the municipality and each adult refugee individually in the family; therefore, the information shared by both parties is crucial. On behalf of the municipality, the assigned program advisor must ensure that the refugee understands the importance of the meeting. The prepared individual integration plan is the starting point for participants who received their first residence permit

structures the basis for preparing final goals for the introductory program and assessing what content the participant can utilize during the program period.

Suppose competence mapping for a refugee before settling in one of the municipalities is not done. In that case, the municipality should complete the procedure for the eligible target group in the introduction program. Refugees have rights and duties towards the fulfillment of introduction program components. The essential requirement is that the mapping should be carried out before the introduction program starts, and issues such as Norwegian language skills, education, and work experience are included in the discussion during the development of the individual plan. The transparency of the competence survey is ensured by a digital tool called Kompass, used in all municipalities in Norway and through which local municipalities have access to the information in knowing if a refugee is mapped in IMDi's mapping system. A refugee competence mapping is carried out within two weeks after the residence permit has been granted. Competence mapping complies with refugees living in the reception center who have been given a residence permit that accounts for them as the target group for the introduction program (Regjeringen, 2016; IMDi, 2022; Lillevik and Tyldum, 2018).

5.6 Norwegian Introduction Program

What is the introduction program? The Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) defines The Norwegian Introduction Program as a training program that will prepare refugees to participate in Norwegian working life and society. I briefly summarize the main content of each mandatory content of the Norwegian introduction program in subtitles. All refugees between 18 and 55 who come to Norway must participate in the introduction program, and the same applies to family members who come to the country later. The participants will learn the Norwegian language through the introductory program, receive training and knowledge about Norwegian working life, education, and understand Norwegian society. The government's goal is for the participant to get a job or education after finishing the introduction program. The purpose is to strengthen the opportunity for newly arrived immigrants to participate in the working environment and society and be financially independent. It is a full-time contract between the municipality and adult refugees that requires participants to be involved daily for 7.5 hours, learn the language, and participate in the intro activities. The resources in the introduction program provide necessary and valuable information for the municipalities and partners on planning and implementing introduction program activities. The participants should start the introduction program no later than three months after the refugee has settled in a

municipality. The mandatory content of the introduction program is compulsory for participants, and the Norwegian integration law states that life skills for refugees in a new country are required for everyone, and families with children are obliged to attend parental guidance. The introduction program consists of training in the Norwegian language, social studies, work- or education-oriented elements (Lillevik, and Tyldum, 2018; Regjeringen, 2016 and IMDi, 2022).

Training in Norwegian Language and Social Studies: Learning the Norwegian language and training in social studies help refugees gain language skills and understand how the normal system functions in everyday life and the cultural background in the society. Language and social studies are the first steps to be accomplished to fulfill the requirements in participating in the job market and planning educational goals. Therefore, one of the primary purposes of integration law in Norway positively contributes to training language skills and the Norwegian society's critical cultural and system functioning issues. Furthermore, strengthening the resilience of refugees through social and language skills helps refugees be active citizens, engage in working life, apply for higher education, and use digital tools during the covid time, a demanding platform. Public services and information are increasingly being posted online, and it is expected that you will be able to find what you need to know by using this information channel. As mentioned previously, the introduction program is a full-time contract. It is essential to create a network and interact in other arenas the participant is in, such as attending language cafes, attending volunteer activities, and joining capacity-building courses conducted by volunteer organizations and NGOs as part of the introduction program. The refugees must utilize their time wisely to help them expedite the integration process with additional efforts. The duty to study the Norwegian language and social studies depends on the type of residence permits, arrival time, and age. Almost every quarter of the year, Norwegian language and social studies tests are regularly conducted in adult learning centers where refugees can attend and complete one of the documents needed later to apply for a permanent residence permit or citizenship (Regjeringen 2016; IMDi, 2022 and Lillevik, and Tyldum, 2018).

Life skills in a new country: During the Introduction Program's implementation, local municipalities arrange intro courses to strengthen the participants' capacity by giving quality training and guidance on various topics. Study in life skills is usually conducted once a week when the participant can attend the language classes offered during the weekdays. The course coordinator arranges the intro sessions in coordination with different municipal entities and

invites the professionals to give lectures on various topics. This course is mainly a dialogue base conducted in groups but may include individual guidance if this is necessary that helps the participant identify and use their competence and resources. The content of the discussion topics is comprehensive, mainly about life in Norway, refugees, the job market, diversity, and competence building to motivate them in life.

The primary purpose of the intro sessions is to strengthen refugees' motivation, help them learn about the new culture with its system functioning, empowerment through awareness, and establish individual goals by identifying their talents to make good choices. Furthermore, provide knowledge about trusting public bodies and systems while helping them learn to live in a new country, become active residents in the community, and be a resource for their family (Regjeringen, 2016; IMDi, 2022; and Lillevik and Tyldum, 2018).

Intro course coordinators invite professionals from volunteer organizations, tax offices, child protection offices, NAV, refugee settlement offices, career counselors, etc. Qualified interpreters are used to ensure the message is given accordingly, and various refugee groups with different levels of education attend the sessions together. Course coordinators should have relevant work and education backgrounds and carry out the program with career guidance competence or other relevant expertise. Since Norway has a unique weather condition, it is essential to maintain better mental and physical requirements to understand the migration process and learn the challenges and opportunities of a healthy lifestyle to prevent diseases such as depression. Participation of refugees from different backgrounds provides a good debate environment to experience unique stories and enrich the sessions to understand how the government entities are structured to deliver services. The awareness of refugees is increased by learning a new culture, rules, and laws through participation in Norwegian society and keeping one's own identity and cultural values, especially inheriting them to their children.

This is mainly summarized to be able to reflect on who you are and to have the desired outcome with the answer to the following questions:

Where do I come from?

What am I getting into?

What do I want for the future?

What does it take to have a good life in a new country?

This is indeed an arduous effort, but building a network in the local community through participation and volunteer work, understanding the system functions, gaining skills in different values, and practicing them in a new society would be an excellent start to achieving specific refugees goals. The designed introduction program gives refugees the needed knowledge to make independent choices while relating them to Norwegian society standards.

The right to live a free and independent life is a well-defined legitimate value, and legislation is built around the individual's rights, regardless of their gender, age, sexuality, gender expression, ethnicity, and religion. Values such as gender equality and equality are central. (IMDi, 2022). The Norwegian government's gender equality action plan states that "*our human resources make Norway a rich country. Gender equality makes good economic sense, and it is through participation in working life we secure the foundations of the welfare state in the future*"(Action Plan, 2014, p.3). Therefore, in that sense, we get an impression to accept that it is not the oil that makes Norway a rich country but gender equality. "*Equality means that all resources must be utilized, regardless of gender, functional ability, ethnicity, age, or sexual orientation* (Action Plan, 2014, p.10)." According to (NOU 2016: 7,) Norway is in transition on career competence, knowledge of work, and education - for individuals and society, participants in the introductory program must get started early in planning their professional and career life in Norway. They lay the foundation for this during the introduction program, and based on their competence, they must find out which way they should go to eventually establish themselves in the Norwegian labor market and become self-sufficient.

Career competency mapping is about education and working life where individuals face limitations, opportunities, make choices, and adapt accordingly to establish lasting connections. Refugees need to have a good plan, know their strengths, interests, and values, and use their expertise. It's a challenging start in a new society to learn at an adult age during a lifetime. Many unforeseen events occur; some choices result from clear thinking, while others result from coincidences. It is learning things by doing, and it is required to be proactive rather than passively waiting for something to happen. Achieving the desired goal is challenging but possible. How network building affects choices is directly related to the person's efforts, and one could apply for many job opportunities, but after all, knowing someone will help you get the job. It is necessary to make reasonable adjustments in getting a job or education in Norway. Understanding the Norwegian education system and labor market characteristics helps us find the path to work or education (Lillevik, and Tyldum, 2018; Regjeringen, 2016 and IMDi, 2022).

Parental guidance: This section of the introduction program's mandatory content is mainly for parents with children and helps them raise their children, understand parental responsibility, and take advantage of the available opportunities. Since being in the new country is an entirely different environment, refugees' parents must promote the integration of their children. The introduction program teaches refugee parents about Norway's rights and rules based on the law. Intro course coordinators invite professionals from the child protection office, detailed presentations and debates are conducted with exciting questions by participants, and many relevant topics and sessions are arranged through the assigned refugee point of contact in the local municipalities. During the competence mapping and plan preparation for refugees, these listed needs are identified, and most of the intro sessions discuss these gaps. Refugees in the introduction program receive parental guidance both in groups and in person. At the same time, an individual guide is also offered in case of specific situations with any of the participants. The central theme of parental guidance is to avoid children from violence and negligence while considering issues such as gender equality, diversity, and cultural sensitivity (Regjeringen, 2016 and IMDi, 2022).

5.7 Integration Efforts by Volunteer Organizations for Refugees

Volunteer organizations have been actively assisting refugees with a wide range of services and activities, playing an essential role in refugees' integration. These organizations' helpful guidance and assistance for refugees mainly encompasses in variety of areas such as improving language skills, building social networks, welcoming them with reducing their feelings of isolation, fears, loneliness, increasing their cultural knowledge about the hosting nations, job search, help them in writing a resume and many more. Studies show refugees interacting, attending activities in the volunteer organizations and have benefited from their services integrated effectively and performed better in terms of improving language skills, building social networks, having more friends, receiving less social help from the government, and being optimistic about the future compared to other refugees. Refugees and their unions have highly appreciated the implementation of many activities by human service organizations (Behnia, 2007). In Norway, the volunteer organizations are considered implementation partners with the local Norwegian government and have been involved in many activities helping refugees integrate into Norwegian society. Frivillighet Norge⁴ is the umbrella that has united Norway's

⁴ Frivillighet Norge = Volunteering Norway, author's translation. <https://www.frivillighetnorge.no/>

volunteer organizations; it was founded in 2005 and has more than 350 member organizations, a cooperation forum for volunteer organizations in Norway. In Trøndelag county, volunteer organizations such as Red Cross, Caritas Trondheim, Christian Intercultural Work (KIA), and Self-help for immigrants and refugees (SEIF) are actively involved in various activities. They are recognized as implementing and supporting partners for the local government. The organizations promote integration programs assisting refugees in language skills, provide capacity-building courses, training about the job market, improving their social knowledge about Norway, and providing legal aid and psychological advice (Frivillighet Norge, 2022).

5.8 Summary

Overall, this section has elaborated on various insights about refugees in the local context of Norway and how the Norwegian government interprets the term refugee taken from the United Nations definition. What provided conditions under the Norwegian integration policy and the laws refugees have in Norway? According to the Norwegian context, what are the requirements for a refugee to be granted protection in Norway? How are their settlement and other efforts arranged in the local municipalities after being granted asylum? What are the overall and obligatory components of the Norwegian introduction program for refugees? In addition, the available means of housing provided for refugees to live and the role of integration efforts by volunteer organizations for refugees are also reviewed in this chapter.

6. CASE STUDY AND ANALYSIS

This chapter will talk about the case analysis based on data collected from the participants in the research during the interviews. The researcher also used relevant data from observations, field visits, and relevant documents. The chapter is divided into three main sections, presenting (6.1) the general level of the Norwegian introduction program on refugees integration according to program advisors and refugees enrolled in the introduction program; (6.2) integration and sense of belonging of refugees in the Norwegian society; and (6.3) how refugees and practitioners perceive the role of housing for refugees integration. In addition, in two different brief sections of (6.4) and (6.5), the participants' suggestions and perspectives of a local resident about refugees in the sub-section are also elaborated. Listening to the experiences of people directly involved with the program's implementation and the refugees sharing their experiences about the program, their sense of belonging, and the role of housing for their integration into the Norwegian society has been an insightful discussion; during the interviews. The findings lead me to a knowledgeable and relevant discussion I have aimed to achieve while presenting the research question of the thesis. These data will further be analyzed with the adopted conceptual framework described in chapter 3 to form an understanding of refugees' integration in Norway. I summarized each section at the end.

6.1 The Norwegian Introduction Program for Refugees Integration

6.1.1 Introduction Program

The introduction program is one of the main topics in this research. By asking the question, what is the introduction program and its link to refugees' integration to educate them to become an effective part of Norwegian society, I aimed to know the perspective of both refugees and their program advisors. The program was defined by both refugees enrolled in the program and the program advisors who implement the Norwegian integration policies in the local municipalities. The introduction program has been an essential first step toward refugees' integration. Their free time participation in Norwegian society, creating networks, making friends, and especially work experience are equally important. The program is essential for newcomer refugees' integration in Norway. Learning the language and receiving civic education about the Norwegian way of life are two components of paramount importance for refugees to establish their lives in Norway. It is not easy to integrate into a new society without being able to speak the local language and understand the laws, regulations, and cultural codes. *"The program is an investment for the future,"* an investment in that refugees get the necessary

qualifications to participate in the Norwegian labor market and become taxpayers. Essential to highlight that the duration of the program depends on the needs of the participants and could take six months to three years (Interview 1).

In addition, the program aims to integrate refugees into Norwegian society and help them become active community members. It is considered a full-time job, and this program provides language, cultural and social study courses for adult refugees granted asylum in Norway. The program is a crucial resource both economically and socially. *“I learned Norwegian, made a network, and felt safe while not worried about my economic situation and used it effectively.”* The program provides essential insight into Norwegian society and prepares participants for work or education. Still, if we are to link this with integration in a broader sense, then the content of the intro program is not enough to support refugees’ integration. *“The program provides valuable facilitation, but it is insufficient”* (Interview 4).

An immediate observation during the (AAR5390) practice internship in urban development in Malvik municipality and interacting with refugees when writing thesis assignment declared that refugees believe that in Norway, three main important tasks are vital for refugees’ to consider: Norwegian language, culture, and system function. Refugees strongly believe that learning the Norwegian language, being familiar with their culture, and knowing how the system functions in Norway are crucial for each individual. However, one of the interviewed refugees said, *“it is not easy to integrate because some people do not have the motivation. Still, if it is valued, it helps you organize and plan your future, for example, if someone wants to continue higher education or find a job”* (Interview 8).

While transcribing the data shared by participants, some respondents also criticized the introduction program’s effectiveness. Two participants declared their thoughts in the result shared during interviews as follows. The program is a promising and fulfilling idea to follow new and existing refugees and integrate into Norwegian society, which sounds good on paper. Still, when it comes to implementation, it falls short as it provides next to nothing for those who have higher education compared to ones with primary or no education. *“I felt like the intro program mainly aimed at people from no education background. Thus, responsible people were not ready to tackle such people with a higher education background”* (Interview 2).

“It is a program imposed on refugees with low effectiveness than expected. The program’s only purpose is to provide the Norwegian language. You have to go through the process of the language course offered, but the result of the tests you pass in the language courses offered in the adult learning centers is not counted as credit. So you have to give the actual test once again. You earn a monthly salary, which is not counted as credit, so if you desire to buy a car or house, this income does not fulfill the required criteria to receive a loan from a bank” (Interview 7).

I noticed a difference in defining the introduction program by refugees and the program advisors. For instance, the four interviewed program advisors and only one refugee (Interview 1) mentioned the program as a full-time job, a contract of 37.5 hours of a whole week work schedule, and obligatory content with explicit goals for refugees to be enrolled. Meanwhile, refugee respondents did not use official terms such as full-time job, contract, or mandatory content. Other than that, both advisors and refugees use words such as learning the language, social studies, opportunity, etc., similarly. Using these terms, the program advisors expect refugees to understand that they have rights and duties and that it’s their responsibility to follow the guidelines accordingly. Two of the program advisors believe refugees must know that the role of funding by taxes from employment and benefits contributes to standard services such as school, health, police, law, benefits, etc. They said it is very different from most refugees’ home countries. The Norwegian culture is based on equality; every citizen has the same opportunity regardless of background and personal income. In Norway, people trust that politicians decide what’s best for the citizens, and it’s important that everyone should follow laws and regulations. It’s a complex system and hard to understand for some refugees. If you can not work, the state provides you with benefits based on earlier income. Suppose you have never worked and still cannot work. In that case, you will get a minimum payment from NAV such as social security benefits (sickness benefits, work assessment benefits, disability benefits, old-age pension) or social help. It’s also based on that you must work if you can. The system in Norway is built based on trust, so any information shared about your health status is enough for a person to receive the proper benefit (Interviews 11 and 12).

“Once, one refugee mentioned that the Norwegian system is like Jesus – you take from rich people and give to poor people” (Interview 12).

The program has been a main tool of the Norwegian government to help newly arrived refugees learn the language and the basic knowledge necessary to live in Norway. *“It’s very important*

that refugees quickly learn the Norwegian language, understand the Norwegian values and culture, and how the social security system works and is funded” (Interview 11). Norway is an expensive country, and if you are going to get a good life, you must have a job. To get a job, you must speak the language. This means getting to know different occupations is essential for the participants of the introduction program. “I try to follow the person at work, talk with the employer and help the refugee see what it takes to achieve specific goals.” The program advisors’ role is to make sure they follow laws and regulations and do as described by IMDi” (Interview 12).

6.1.2 Daily Routines in the Introduction Program

The outcome of the answer from the participants in describing a usual daily activity during the introduction program was also different. The daily routines of participants of the program might differ from person to person and municipality to municipality. Though the program’s specifics might be additional for different people, some processes probably remain the same depending on their needs and existing opportunities at their schools. For example, common daily routines may include attending classes (both language and social studies), working alone or in groups, and some practical learning in a workplace. Since the introduction program is considered a job as per the law, the participants must work 37.5 hours a week. When ordinary schools take breaks, the language schools for refugees usually offer additional courses to make up the 37.5 hours of work a week (Interviews 1, 11, 12, 13, and 14). By asking the question about a usual daily routine during the introduction program, I wanted to know how refugees and program advisors describe a typical day during the program.

Could you describe the daily routines during the introduction program? According to interviewee 2, the daily routine depends on their Norwegian language level; for instance, those with low levels continue to Norwegian language courses while people with high levels are either on language training or job training. Occasionally people in NAV hold seminars during winter or summer break. Still, these seminars are mainly aimed at newcomers. Yet, they also include others who have been here for years as they struggle to find sources for different people, thus combining everyone into a single seminar, ultimately quite useless for some refugees (Interview 2).

Two of the ten interviewed refugees declared their dissatisfaction regarding group studies or intro courses conducted during the weekdays after Norwegian classes or joining similar group

training the municipality offers. They attended group study programs, where all refugees sat in the same class regardless of their age and level of education. For instance, *“a refugee with a high level of education has to sit in the same class and cast away time together with another refugee who has no education and is completely illiterate”* (Interviews 2 and 7).

Five of the ten interviewed refugees described their daily routine as dividing the hours between 08:00 and 15:30. While the rest of the five refugees interviewed in the research simply briefed their daily routine by saying they were going to Norwegian classes and doing homework. According to the refugees, the daily routine during the introduction program was from 08:00 to 11:30, and they attended the Norwegian language course. From 11:30-12:30 was lunch break. From 12:30 to 15:30, social/cultural study courses, language cafes, internships, and working as volunteers in different organizations were offered by the program as an activity to improve their language skills (Interviews 3, 4, 5, 7, and 10).

In some cases, refugee enrollment as part-time or full-time internships allowed them to learn much about Norway’s working environment while simultaneously developing their Norwegian language skills. It is worth mentioning that their routines during the program have changed gradually, especially after they managed to improve their Norwegian language skills. Then they planned to set some specific goals to fulfill the criteria of entering university to continue higher education. For example, obtaining an English and Norwegian language certificate (IELTS, TOFEL, B2 in the Norwegian language) or working as an intern in offices or volunteer organizations to build work experience in Norway. Participation in language classes, work practice, and social studies are mandatory. Through this, *“refugees receive an introduction benefit to cover all necessary expenses of their family, such as house rent, food, clothing, electricity, and other costs”* (Interview 5). The program has also provided parental guidance for refugee families with kids to learn how to raise their children in Norway.

The program advisors defined a regular daily routine during the introduction program, following the refugees according to the created individual plan before starting the introduction program while following the regulations described by IMDi. The individualized introduction program will differ for every person according to their background, knowledge, education, and needs, and everyone will have an individual plan. The Introduction law states that it should be a full-time program, that is 37,5 hours a week filled with Norwegian language classes, society knowledge, and work-related programs. For example, training in work-life knowledge of

Norway, educational programs, parenting advice groups, and many other groups and topics according to the participants' needs are organized as a typical workday (Interview 11, 12, 13 and 14).

There are some contradictions when refugees and the program advisors make statements about the introduction program's participants (refugees) having individual plans. For instance, some refugees have criticized social study classes, intro courses, group studies, etc. According to the law, all program advisors have defined the content of the introduction program quite well. Though compared, the statement of advisors and the various education levels of refugees have not been answered realistically during the interviews.

In the program's first two years, refugees learn Norwegian and about the society at school. As soon as possible, they will have practice (internship) in a workplace to strengthen working skills, improve their Norwegian language, and learn how Norwegian work-life is while learning Norwegian at school. Perhaps, the refugee wants to work in this place after the program and learn what they must do to get this kind of job. Program advisors also run different courses for 2 hours every week. The municipality gives more information about the local services, how you apply for jobs, follow up with your children regarding school and activities, things you can do after school/work, etc. The program adviser will also have meetings with the participant at school, at work, or individually to make goals – and help find the way into work-life. Do you want to get an education, courses, or just a job? Some participants need more than two years to learn adequate Norwegian to get a job (Interviews 11, 12, 13 and 14).

In addition, the quotes from program advisors talk about daily routines with more general details, while by asking the question about how is a daily routine for introduction program participants, I wanted the advisors to describe a typical day in the program and their expectations from refugees attending the program. I asked a follow-up question to know the program advisors' perspective regarding how satisfied are they with refugees using their time effectively during the introduction program.

“To be honest, as program advisors, we are not fully satisfied with some refugees' participation and the way they use the opportunity as it is. We believe some refugees have too few classes in school, and some are not having enough activities, but we also see some are very tired after school. Some refugees are productively using their time and resources by finding different opportunities

to learn the language by attending the language practice cafes. Those with fewer resources can sometimes be more passive and wait for us to help them” (Interviews 11, 12, and 13).

6.1.3 Specific Offerings in the Program

The follow-up questions about the introduction program, such as what the designed program in specific offers to refugees, shed light on more details about refugees’ understanding of the program and how their program advisors perceive it. Specific program offerings to each individual are vastly different, and it is different in terms of content and timeframe. Even though the program’s primary focus is to provide the refugees with Norwegian language classes and social studies about the Norwegian way of life, adult refugees get an opportunity to pursue their secondary or high school education if needed or deemed necessary. It means that participants of the program continue to get their monthly introduction salaries as long as they actively attend one of the said schools that are offered as part of their introduction program. In simpler terms, you can combine your secondary or high school education with your introduction program, but not your higher education. Participants are encouraged to attend work practice in the areas they are interested in, and it depends on their experience and willingness to invest in their future carrier. To start higher education, one must end the introduction program and stop receiving a monthly salary as an intro benefit (Interview 1). The introduction program, in its essence, aim to integrate refugees into Norwegian traditions and culture and provide information as to how a person can get into the job market, but how well these are implemented is a controversial topic. Since people from different backgrounds or ethnicities are different, one must approach the situation accordingly (Interview 2).

“I think it is only effective for those refugees with no education background. But for those with higher education and knowledge, it is a waste of their time only to show them how to integrate.” (Interview 7). According to interviewee 4, the program itself offered almost nothing but language courses. “It is probably because the program is designed for a group of people who have so many challenges.” Still, at the same time, *“it gives considerable flexibility to the advisors who organize the courses.”* So it depends on how an advisor is good at their job in finding better solutions by using this flexibility and the opportunity offered by the program. In Addition, a married couple answered the interview questions together and shared their experience. They found out after six months that the program’s content is made for those with

a low level of education, while they both had a high level of education from their home country (Interview 6).

As for the program advisors, based on the official policy, the introduction program mainly provides work knowledge, language classes, and work training to get experience in a field that suits them to build a career background. Furthermore, everything that has to do with their education is knowing how to translate a document and how to apply to the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT⁵). There are obligatory parts in the introduction program, which is stated in the law, but some parts will be flexible according to the need of each individual (Interviews 11, 12, 13, and 14). When refugees are not familiar with basic digital tools or cannot read and write, the program advisors spend a lot of time helping them understand basic things such as using a bank ID. *“Most refugees lack digital competence because they come from a background where they are not used to using digital tools in their country of origin”* (Interview 11).

6.1.4 Support Coordination

Most interviewed refugees shared their reflections about how their program advisors followed up on their plans and knew how the local municipality coordinated the implementation of the introduction program. For example, one of the participants described that the program advisor was responsible for creating an individual plan during the introduction program. The goal was to develop a clear individual plan during the two years of the program. Based on the created plan, the refugee has targeted some goals to achieve. For example, he continued his higher education and was supported with relevant information. In addition, he was assisted in finding a kindergarten spot for his child, how to get a driving license, finding an internship to gain work experience, filling out official forms, etc., at the beginning of the program (Interview 3). Another participant described the situation about how the support is coordinated between the refugee and their contact person with the direct supervision of the program advisor. He expressed his dissatisfaction by saying that his program advisor tracks his attendance when he attends different classes. *“I receive financial support to maintain my livelihood, which is considerably lower than Norwegian citizens’ average income”* (Interview 7).

⁵ NOKUT = Nasjonalt organ for kvalitet i utdanningen = Norwegian Agency for quality assurance in education = Author’s translation

In an interview conducted with a refugee family where both the female and the male in the household agreed to answer the questions together, they criticized their program advisor as passive in following up on their plans during the introduction program. They described that the support is organized in the form of follow-up interviews, and there was no sign of any specific follow-up plan noticed by the supervisor. Sometimes it took a long time to get a response from the program advisor. *“The content of the conversations focused on reality orientation, which meant that there was no change in motivation.”* This relevant point could not only be an individual case but also be a common situation among refugees (Interview 6).

Compared to refugees’ answers, the program advisors’ answers mainly focused on what other municipal units are involved as cooperative partners with NAV, the department of qualification center for refugees, or the refugee settlement office to implement the introduction program. According to the program advisors, many municipal entities coordinate with NAV or the refugees’ settlement office to help newly arrived refugees and get them to start the program as soon as possible. There is good coordination among municipal units, private organizations, civil society, kindergarten offices, libraries, schools, health stations, volunteer organizations, adult learning centers, child welfare services, and the refugee settlement offices. The introduction program is a national program for newcomer refugees across Norway. However, each given municipality has its own arrangement/administration. In some municipalities, NAV is in charge of the program, while in other municipalities, the language schools for adult refugees or adult learning centers have administrative responsibilities. Regardless of how the support is organized, the program’s intent remains the same, e.g., to help newcomer refugees learn the language, understand the social and cultural codes, and, more importantly, supplement their existing qualifications. In addition, the level and the nature of introduction support depend on participants’ previous educational credentials, work experience, and individual needs for capacity development. Every participant will have a supervisor. The supervisors work together; they coordinate their work and ensure they work according to the introduction/integration law. IMDi and the state administrator in Trøndelag are all coordinating and helping the local municipalities with the program on behalf of the national government. There’s also a professional forum for municipal refugee work (FFKF), Norway’s largest refugee professional community, where all the program advisors cooperate and communicate through a Facebook group. One of the primary responsibilities of FFKF⁶ is to control local municipalities’ activity

⁶ FFKF = faglig forum for kommunalt flyktningarbeid = professional forum for municipal refugee work. Author’s translation. Link to the Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1435561603135913>)

to ensure they are implementing the introduction program according to the law (Interviews 11, 12, 13, and 14).

6.1.5 Importance of the Introduction Program

By asking the question about the importance of the introduction program, I aimed to know how well the refugees understand the program's significance while being interested in finding out how their program advisors perceive it. Based on their experience with the introduction program, both refugees and program advisors shared similar opinions on whether refugees understand the importance of the program very well. Refugees and their program advisors have mentioned that it would be challenging to achieve their integration goals without being able to receive the appropriate education and the financial support they receive under the introduction program. However, how they mentioned how much one could benefit from the program depend on the participant's efforts.

Seven out of ten refugees shared their thoughts that the program is effective for their integration in achieving their goals, starting from learning the Norwegian language. They believe that the transition period for a refugee who comes to Norway becomes more manageable when they go through the introduction program and use the opportunity effectively (Interviews 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, and 10).

Three refugees believe the program is helpful, though they want drastic changes in the content and how the municipalities should implement it. They all agree and understand the program's importance; however, it does not mean equal making maximum use of the opportunity the program provides (Interviews 2, 6, and 7).

How well do the refugees understand the importance of the introduction program?

“I think no one denies the program's positive impact on their overall integration today. Some believe there is still room for improvement, particularly in offering an individually tailored program that meets each individual's distinct needs and capacity development goals” (Interview 1).

Some correspondents have criticized the program content and how the local municipalities implement it, and they suggest that the program advisors identify gaps and organize each plan accordingly. For instance, interviewee 2 believe that the responsible people are doing what they

can to convey the importance of the program, but he believes the way they do it “*must undergo a dramatic change if they want to enhance the program’s significance*” among refugees. A newly arrived refugee said, “*They can easily utilize the knowledge and skills of refugees by giving them actual jobs and persuading them to make a better career within a shorter period*” (Interviews 7).

In the interview, a married couple refugee said, “*we would have been aware of how important it is to learn Norwegian, get to know Norwegian working life, and have a job*” (Interview 6). It would have been better if the municipality conducted start-up sessions so that we, as refugees, understood the importance of the program pretty well before starting the introduction program. Added to this, another candidate stated, “*some refugees realize the importance of the program when they are finished with the program*” (Interview 9).

How well do the newly arrived refugees understand anything at all when they come to Norway? According to the two program advisors, understanding the importance of the introduction program “*differs from person to person*” because refugees are a very heterogeneous group. When arriving in Norway, those with higher education quite quickly understand the system, so it depends on the refugee’s education. Most are just trying to manage their new life as best as possible. Many refugees take it for granted that Norwegian society should economically support them through their welfare system/tax money. Refugees are not using the program as an opportunity to learn and understand, maybe because of their “*mental state or not being used to take responsibility*” for learning or because of their incompetence. “*They will be sorry when their application is denied citizenship status.*” Many will have trouble at their work because their language skills are not good enough. In the meantime, many learn very much during the introduction program that they can manage their life in Norway, so there is a difference from person to person (Interviews 11 and 12). In addition, refugees have multicultural backgrounds, and finding a unique solution will be challenging. Some understand the system quickly, and others have problems understanding why they need to learn Norwegian and work. Some refugees have no education from their homeland and do not understand how specialized the Norwegian system is. “*In their country, they could have worked without any certificate, but here even if you’re working as a cleaner, you have to have courses and a graduation certificate from that particular course.*” After a while, they all understand that they have no chance without proper documentation. Many refugees also “*struggle with all the digital solutions,*” and it’s a long way for people with no educational background” (Interviews 11 and 12).

Two of the program advisors acknowledged the refugees' situation and that many obstacles exist that could influence the understanding of refugees about the program. Yet they wish that this opportunity is taken into consideration seriously by refugees. In addition, interviewees 12 and 13 admitted that one would need more time to think and reflect on these complex questions. Though interviewee 12 admitted that long-term effort would make sense for refugees' situation.

“I try to understand the refugee's situation because I have lived in a village without electricity for a year in Nepal, so I have tried to live in that nonindustrial and non-digital society. Then I was kind of the person who did not know the basics. I was the village clown who did not understand how to wash my body, cook food, and do women's things. In general, I wish refugees understand the introduction program as a privilege and use their time well because later, they will not have the opportunity to learn the language. I also understand that when refugees come to Norway; they are of different mental statuses; some are very focused, and some are worried, scared, and thinking about their families back home. But then, how to turn them to get used to this society is a long-term effort which is required” (Interview 11).

“My overall impression is that many do not take the program seriously enough and do not put in the work necessary to learn Norwegian properly. But there might be several reasons they progress slowly: social situation, illness, lack of system understanding, and mental stress” (Interview 13).

6.1.6 Challenges of the Designed Norwegian Introduction Program

Through the interview with refugees and the program advisors, I discussed the shortcomings and the existing challenges of the designed Norwegian introduction program. Since the introduction program with its link to refugees, integration as a start-up program has been one of the main topics in this research. Listening to the experiences of people who are directly involved with the program has been an insightful discussion.

What are the shortcomings/existing challenges of the designed Norwegian introduction program? Six out of ten refugees shared their thoughts that the program content fails to address suitable infrastructure, especially for the highly educated refugees. At the same time, adult learning centers lack the schooling skills to help refugees learn the Norwegian language. The Norwegian language teachers in the adult learning center are *“old, have no teaching or pedagogy background, and could not provide inclusive language offers, especially for adult*

learning groups.” (Interview 3). Another participant said, *“The contact teacher also made considerable absences, and the substitute teacher could not follow the plan so well.”* (Interview 6). In addition, some participants believe that many of the cultural and social courses were repetitive and boring. They thought their time was wasted with some components of the Norwegian introduction program (Interviews 2 and 6). The lack of an individually tailored program seems to be one of the most significant shortcomings of the program. The individually tailored program is a supplementary education relevant to participants’ existing field of expertise and practical learning in a suitable workplace. It seems that tailoring the introduction program to accommodate every individual need is quite challenging. Finding a solution to enhance refugees’ existing qualifications with possible supplementary courses is of utmost importance for the municipalities and the refugees. Municipalities avoid using resources to educate their introduction program participants from scratch. The refugee participants save a lot of time getting the necessary certification for their educational credentials and work experiences to work in their fields of expertise (Interviews 1, 3, 6).

The Norwegian introduction program is designed *“for people with little to no educational background,”* and the current program and its implementations fall short for higher-educated people (Interview 2). Other participants said, *“if people have a low education background from their homeland, then the introduction program offers a good chance to go to school and start studying.”* If people are educated, in most cases, their education is not accepted, and they have to start all over, which might be very boring for some people. It is difficult for people with good education to start all over (Interview 8).

The main shortcoming of the program lies in achieving the set objectives of the program. Participants do not get a job despite being through the program, especially women who cannot reach the expectation of finding a job. For instance, some refugee women, unlike men, do not have higher competency, have not attended school, have no computer skills, and lack work experience. Because of cultural perspectives, women used to be housewives and look after kids while men were the primary breadwinner in the family. Language proficiency is another area where some participants struggle despite finishing the program. The program is designed to get less time for those with higher education. In contrast, if one wants to practice their higher education, they need a much higher language proficiency (Interview 5).

According to the interviewee (7), the program is not helping and developing the participant's actual competencies, which means they will not be able to build up a background and gain credit. If the program aims to learn the language and find a job within the participants' capacity, that will not be achieved either. At the same time, while designing the program, some realities about refugees' life are not considered, and therefore the program lacks an understanding of refugees' social and cultural sensitivities. It is forgotten that the participants have their *"values in their life, and they are attached to them and cannot continue to live without them. Give them time and let them still feel the blessing of their own culture and language"* (Interview 7).

Since the question is about the introduction program's shortcomings and existing challenges, three of the participants believe that it is not the program that fails to deliver expected results. They clearly stated and criticized the problem with the program advisors who implemented the introduction program on behalf of the local municipality. The program advisors have a significant role in creating a good plan. It is up to the advisors to be smart about finding a suitable solution based on each refugee's capacity. If the program advisors do not follow the created individual plan during the program, refugees will have more challenges after finishing the introduction program. Currently, this program does not have a suitable infrastructure, especially for highly educated refugees, and the advisors do not know how to guide these educated refugees (Interviews 4, 8, and 10).

The national or local government should evaluate and improve the program advisors' communication skills. Knowing how the program advisors in the municipality create their target plans and how it is measured as accomplished is relevant. The local municipality can improve the advisors' capacity to identify, prioritize, and follow up on individual plans created for any refugee to collaborate effectively with the program participants. If they are supported by workshops regularly, they can think about these issues and plan appropriately. Norway has many facilities for people in the introduction program or newcomers in general. Still, getting the correct information and having the proper advice from the advisors is incredibly complicated, especially for those with higher education. For example, one participant said, *"I got information about how I should use the toilet, which is insulting. Still, I did not get any information about the different exams that I needed to be able to apply to university."* The advisors can use their resources to find the relevant information for the participants. *"Some advisors do it, but some do not"* (Interview 4).

According to interviewee 4, most courses arranged during the introduction program are a waste of time, money, and resources that are ineffective—for example, writing CV courses. Since many CV courses were arranged during the program, he does not remember the number of CV courses given during the intro program. He wanted the program advisors to know that finding a job is not related to writing the proper CV for refugees. The municipality must evaluate the course content before the arrangement. Yet most of the personnel deciding the content of these courses are unaware of the realities in the job market. Furthermore, how far are the program advisors informed of the training centers' resources and capacity to provide these sessions? *“If the local municipalities used the resources effectively, the result would have been completely different”* (Interview 4).

Based on the reflections from the advisors, I noticed some critiques about the available resources, refugees, and their realities. According to the four interviewed program advisors, factors such as lack of digital competencies, health problems, age issues, pre-migration, post-migration consequences, and fewer offered language classes time factors are the shortcomings of the introduction program. They believe that the program helps the refugees in their first years in Norway. In the first year, many are confused and mentally unstable; their minds are on what they left and what they lost. Many cannot learn as much as expected because their mind is elsewhere. Many have health issues as well. And many get children during their program-time. This partly explains why the program is not as efficient as it should be; it is challenging to work in such circumstances. So many challenges encompass; there should be more language classes, the school should be closer to home, more daily interactions, and more opportunities to speak the Norwegian language during the day. There are so many ways we could and should improve our work and interaction with the refugees. The use of PC and mobile phones is also difficult for some. Maybe the school lacks methods to educate those who have never gone to school before, or is the time factor too short (Interviews 11, 12, 13, and 14).

6.1.7 Existing conditions for improvement

When the participants described the challenges of the Norwegian introduction program, I asked a follow-up question to find a solution to know how the government could effectively improve the current introduction program differently. Participants believe refugees' needs are different and complex, and tailoring a program to meet everyone's needs could be challenging, especially for language schools. There is a huge difference between those who have never gone to school

and those who are university educated. However, the four interviewed program advisors, and one of the interviewed refugees are optimistic about the new integration law (under implementation since January 2021 addressing this challenge by focusing on individual needs. According to them, the new integration law that came into effect in 2021 focuses on giving the participants formal education and skills needed in Norway. They believe the changes in the new law will help refugees achieve their career goals quicker and more effectively than before.

Sharing the same information with refugees with different backgrounds and knowledge has been boring, repeated, and a waste of time, especially for people with higher education. This has been mentioned previously as one of the program's weaknesses (Interviews 2, 4, and 7). To overcome this shortcoming, two participants suggested that more seminars could be directed to different groups. *"People can be grouped according to their education, language level, or previous job type and given more appropriate and targeted activities or seminars."* There could be more work towards helping others get a job or higher education, and responsible people might have more insight or knowledge on these matters (Interviews 1 and 2).

Three of the interviewed people suggested that the program could be improved if the program advisors have good coordination, are trained to follow refugee plans, have cultural knowledge about refugees and understand what to do for refugees to track their plans more practically. *"The program advisors should coordinate well with the institutions to gain better information on advising refugees to find their way in Norway"* (Interview 4). Program advisors working in NAV have a very good influence, and they should talk to different companies to introduce refugees to other companies and organizations. NAV should do more to link them to offices to learn the language and build their future career goal. *"It is very difficult for refugees to communicate directly with companies, and most often, they are not interested in hiring them."* Therefore, following the mentioned points will benefit refugees during the introduction program (Interview 8). Interviewee 10 believes that program advisors should know more about refugees' backgrounds. For the introduction program and the integration process to work well, the program advisors must first understand the *"cultures, capacity, strengths, and anything that will help them effectively do their job."* They should be aware of how to follow refugees' plans and link them with schools, municipalities, and workplaces (Interview 10). If refugees find a job as an employee, this is a significant achievement. As mentioned before by interviewee 7, anything other than that, such as starting their own business, or buying a house, requires

refugees to have credit. Refugees receive a monthly salary during the program, but to be eligible to obtain a loan from a bank, their income is not counted as credit.

Linking refugees with the job market is another central topic of the introduction program, which helps refugees be financially independent. This participant believes that if you have a job, then you are integrated and suggested that *“the program should come with a new solution to creating more workplaces and increasing the percentage of those who find a job, and it is because having a job is one of the indicators of integration”* (Interview 5). Another participant believes that language is the starting point, and to improve the program’s effectiveness, more attention should be given to language courses as it is one of the core topics of the introduction program.

The program should be longer once the capacity of a refugee is evaluated and an individual plan is created. The county municipality should ensure that the language classes offered by adult learning centers meet the teaching standards. For example, he said, *“there could be two teachers in the class for 20 adult participants, and a level of C1 Norwegian classes should be offered”* (Interview 6).

To live by the origin country’s values, culture, and religion has been refugees’ main concern. For the introduction program to work well, one of the refugees said, *“let us have access to the values tied to culture, language, and religion and make the introduction period longer. Please do not force us more than we can bear”* (Interview 7). At the same time, another participant wanted the program content to consider the social aspects of refugees. *“It could be better if I had more contact and collaboration with other youth, high schools, and public places, which would help us integrate better with Norwegian society. I feel like we are strangers to Norwegians, especially youth”* (Interview 9).

Similar to the opinion of some refugees about the introduction program, an advisor believes that the program is not designed to correspond with refugees’ realities. She believes that the program is just a little start and wishes there was more time to relate Norwegian society to refugees’ backgrounds.

“...There is a wall between their life in Norway and back home. Sometimes I feel like the law is very strict and does not consider the reality and the situation of the people we are working with.

The expectation is very straightforward, stating that everyone should have a full-time program. This does not comply with some refugees' situations, mainly grown-up women after age 50. They have given birth to many children, and refugee women have many health problems. There are many health problems among older refugees, and this issue is not considered, and we can not offer a part-time program. I wish the lawmakers understood what the program advisors are dealing with and how much time we spend with people who can not read and write..." (Interview 11).

Another program advisor did not say much about improvements to the introduction program though she was optimistic about the new introduction program's guidelines. Like interviewee eight's reflection, she said the program is suitable for refugees with less or no education. "*If you do not have primary school skills, you can have a more extended program, more than two years. How this will work is yet to be found out*" (Interview 12).

Another program advisor believes linking the offered introduction program to refugees with an actual job from the first day would have more realistic results. For instance, one aspect that would improve things would be "*combining work and Norwegian teaching for refugees without a college education.*" So they could start working from the start of the introduction program and be supported by Norwegian teaching at their workplace (Interview 14).

6.1.8 Summary

Overall, the Norwegian introduction program for refugees' integration is not designed based on refugees' reality since they are a diverse group with complicated backgrounds. There seems to be a lack of coordination between the authorities and the refugees, resulting in different viewpoints. The participants enrolled in the program criticized the way adult learning centers for refugees offer language classes and the competencies of their program advisors in implementing the program in the local municipalities while guiding them in the right direction. Three out of ten participants believe that the program is essential but needs specific improvements to alter an individualized plan for refugees to address their actual needs. At the same time, the other seven have common ground about the program helping them learn the language and a starting point to integrate into the Norwegian society. The program advisors expressed their thoughts that refugees do not take the importance of the program as one time-given opportunity seriously. Refugees to understand this, one of the participants suggested that the local municipality could provide orientation to the program participants before starting the introduction program. In general, both refugees and the program advisors agree that the program is important, but I noticed some contradictions in how they answered each question. Most of the reflections from program advisors seemed superficial when only attributed to refugees' educational background, and the ones with good knowledge benefit from the opportunity effectively. Refugees might not have the mental space or be ready to face all the challenges in Norway at once. At the same time, people learn differently, and how educational systems are most frequently unable to address all these different ways. Therefore, knowing advisors' reflections on refugees with impaired mental conditions would have been insightful.

6.2 Integration and Sense of Belonging of Refugees in the Norwegian Society

6.2.1 Integration into the Norwegian Society

By asking the participants about defining successful integration, I aimed to know how participants of the introduction program and their program advisors expected refugees to utilize their efforts and resources in achieving effective results to integrate into the local communities in Norway. For refugees who have developed their capacities through the introduction program compared to those (advisors) who facilitated the program, the answers varied on how each respected group perceived integration. There were 14 participants in total (ten refugees and four advisors).

How do you define and understand successful integration in the Norwegian neighborhood?

According to one of the refugees who has previously enrolled in the introduction program, *“successful integration means learning the Norwegian language and regular interaction with neighbors in the neighborhood.”* Successful integration in a neighborhood can simply mean fitting into the local community or being accepted as part of the neighborhood. However, successful integration has certain requirements, and fulfilling them takes time. It is crucially important to speak Norwegian to communicate with the neighbors. In addition to the language, learning unwritten social codes also plays an essential role in being part of the local community. However, it could be time-taking and even perhaps challenging (Interview 1).

Integration is a time-taking process, and there can not be a particular process for refugees’ integration. If it is accepted that the process requires more time, then the integration process could be more natural and effective for refugees and the hosting country. Regarding this, one of the refugees currently enrolled in the program believes that when Norwegians and refugees know each other’s background, language, and religion, it facilitates integration. *“The hosting nation (Norway) should not impose refugees to become Norwegians so quickly. It takes time, and refugees deserve to live the way they desire and let them find their way of following the Norwegian lifestyle standards”* (Interview 7).

It might be difficult to keep frequent contact with Norwegians. According to one of the interviewees, Norwegians have a unique way of living in their private space, making it challenging to maintain regular communication. As for the successful integration in the Norwegian neighborhood, one can argue that it might be pretty difficult to find someone to talk to in the neighborhood. Norwegians are introverts; *“I have experienced that they are rarely at*

home, either at work or out on excursions. After one and a half years, I was able to sit and drink coffee with one of my neighbors". In addition, learning the hosting country's codes and keeping their own traditions is important for refugees. For instance, one interviewee said, *"for me, integration without assimilation is very important. We try to keep up our best to be on the same page with Norwegian society without sacrificing our traditions or beliefs"* (Interview 2).

According to interviewee 3, integration is a two-way process that requires cooperation and respect between refugees and citizens of a hosting country. Refugees should build a sense of belonging and contribute to the community actively. *"Successful integration will occur when refugees have a sense of belonging in the new society they live in and feel that they are valuable members of society, not a burden that society should deal with"* (Interview 3). It might happen that despite efforts by a refugee, members of the hosting country ignore them, which complicates the integration process. As newly arrived in Norwegian society, refugees need to learn the language, the rules and laws, and the culture and consider all these things in their social life. An interviewee explained, *"If some people ignore us or are irritated because of our name, color, etc., we can not talk about the successful integration. We should remember that we have mutual responsibilities to keep up a peaceful process in society"* (Interview 4).

For some refugees interviewed in this research paper, finding a job and obeying the law are key indicators for integration. It is unimportant if a person who goes through the integration process continues to wear, eat, and perform activities like they used to and not act as Norwegian. As long as refugees have a job or try to get a job, then they have succeeded in achieving one of their goals. Still, they think in society, people do not get it this way, and refugees expect their clothes, eating habits, and free-time activities should not be a problem for others. Interviewee 4 believes that it is important for society to be aware that *"integration is not about acting like Norwegians or being uniquely different but obeying the laws and considering the rules"* (Interview 4).

Due to their competence, finding jobs for refugees has not been easy, while finding a job requires hard effort. For instance, some refugees even had to leave the city they used to live in due to the lack of job opportunities. *"Many refugees left the Trondheim region because of the lack of job opportunities and moved to the south of Norway"* (Interview 8).

Being an active part of the local community is important for some interviewees. For example, engaging in collective and volunteer work “*dugnadsarbeid*⁷” is essential. Refugees can participate in volunteer activities arranged by their local community to clean the area in their locality and be part of the solution in the neighborhood. Local communities in Norway organize activities at different scopes, starting at the city level and finishing at a small place. Therefore, they might always find collective groups to participate in and help their neighbors. One example is parents’ participation in night patrol to control teenagers at night. There were concerns about “*teenagers’ activities using narcotics and alcohol, followed by fights on weekends.*” Therefore, participating and strengthening parent-group patrol at night might help avoid unhappy incidents. Furthermore, being part of “*sports activities for both adults and children*” in the neighborhood is crucial to communicating and understanding social codes. “*Sports activities for adults and children can be another area to build a good network and get to know people in our vicinity*” (Interview 5).

Some interviewees believe that participating in decision-making through elections is important for refugees’ integration. This interviewee believes that refugee parents are not actively participating in parental councils at schools and kindergarten. A lack of eagerness among refugees to be an active part of society makes the integration process difficult, especially for adult refugees. Voting and participating in decision-making are always essential at the local level. Active participation in parents’ meetings and councils at kindergarten and school is a vital neighborhood element. “*It has been experienced that refugees are more passive in attending and taking part in parents-group boards and committees at school and kindergarten*” (Interview 5).

Furthermore, I found relevant answers to the above-formulated question regarding the integration of refugees into the Norwegian society from those who facilitated the introduction program, namely program advisors. It was helpful to have advisors’ perspectives regarding how they define and understand successful integration in Norwegian society. Four advisors answered the question and shared their expectations which they want refugees to follow accordingly. For example, one of the advisors indicated the importance of the neighborhood in Norway. She wanted refugees to consider her suggestions which would be a good start for the refugees to practice. She says that there are a lot of details that we need to focus on integrating positively into an area. Unfortunately, the sense of belonging in the neighborhood where people

⁷ *dugnadsarbeid* = volunteer work. Author’s translation

live is declining in many places. People care about their own house or apartment and take less responsibility for neighbors and the community than earlier. Still, there are many duties when you are living in a neighborhood. These duties include: Keeping your garden neat and clean.

“We all want to live in a nice neighborhood. Look at your own house, is it looking nice. What about the garbage? Is it a mess? What about the mailbox? What about the curtains. Does your house look like a fort, or does it look welcoming and friendly? Shovel the snow on the pavement and sometimes the road if you share a private road with several neighbors. You have to rake the leaves in your garden, so they will not blow into the neighbor’s garden. It would be best to cut your trees and bushes not to bother your neighbors. If you live in an apartment, you should do your duty to clean the shared stairs and other works that need to be done. Maybe you should volunteer for the housing board of administration. Go out and shovel sand and work in your garden. You need to be available to meet and greet your neighbors and have a little chat with them once in a while. Knowing your neighbors a little bit and keeping good relations with them will help you avoid conflicts and problems. Read the local newspaper online or in paper to be updated on what is happening around you” (Interview 11).

One of the advisors believes that although neighbors are not close friends, they occasionally come together to arrange activities. According to her, most people in Norway start a good integration process in their neighborhood. *“In Norway, it is common to know your neighbors so that you can have short conversations or say hello. I do not think many of them are close friends. But most people feel at home in the neighborhood”* (Interview 12).

There’s common sense among refugees and program advisors who agree on some part of the answer regarding learning the Norwegian language and participating in social activities. Following political discussions and news on Norwegian TVs and radio can also be a helpful tool to learn the language and understand what is happening in the country and the region they live in. When can one be integrated successfully into a society? An advisor’s brief answer to this question was; *“Speaking the Norwegian language, having a job, going to school, having friends, and participating in social activities where they talk in Norwegian, and at least to some extent following the news and the country’s political debate”* (Interview 13). According to another advisor, If refugees live only among people from their country of origin but can work and study, participate in democratic systems, and access the resources they need, it would be

considered integration. Most people define integration as having Norwegian friends and colleagues and participating in Norwegian social life (Interview 14).

6.2.2 Ownership and Belonging in Norwegian Society

This section focuses on how participants of the introduction program develop their ownership and sense of belonging in Norwegian society. Interviewees, both participants of the introduction program and advisors, shared their views during the interview. Experiences are both promising and not promising because some interviewees develop their sense of belonging earlier than others. Furthermore, there are those whose views are in twilight, and interviewees are less skeptical. The development of feelings of ownership and belonging is important for a refugee, and it is not easy and is not coming overnight. In mastering the sense of ownership and belonging in Norwegian society, there is a need for language practice and learning local codes, both official and non-official. Some interviewees even believe that building these feelings needs efforts of both refugees and people of the hosting country. The participants (10 refugees and 4 advisors) were asked how they think and experience ownership and belonging in Norwegian society. The perspective of participants reflected and quoted as follows:

- Improving feelings of ownership and belonging is a complex process that takes a long time.

For most interviewees, developing feelings of ownership and belonging is important for social integration. Some interviewees believe that accepting Norway as a home country can trigger a person's feelings and later develop a sense of ownership and belonging. *"I think accepting Norway as the second homeland is key to strengthening feelings of ownership and belonging"* (Interview 1).

However, developing such feelings is not easy, and according to some interviewees, it is a very complex issue. The complexity here means that mastering a sense is an acculturation process that a refugee needs to enhance over time. This process includes learning the language and culture of the host country and adapting to the new environment. One of the interviewees says that:

"...I would say that building a new, bicultural identity is a relatively long process, and it starts with the introduction program but continues long after the introduction. As per the integration-

related literature, a successful integration takes between seven to ten years. I believe support of the host society for refugees and their integration is also of great relevance...” (Interview 1).

The introduction program is helpful and is only a start to learning and adapting to the new society. Further, it is up to refugees to use their efforts to succeed. It is not only refugees who believe that developing the feelings of ownership and belonging is a complex issue and needs a long time to master. Some advisors of the introduction program believe that building a sense of belonging and ownership is difficult and complicated. One of the advisors said that developing the feeling of belonging and ownership is “*Complex*” (Interview 14). It may differ with whom we talk to; if the target group is refugees, they think developing a feeling of belonging and ownership is challenging. Despite the complexity of developing feelings of ownership and belonging, some interviewees (refugees) feel that they developed this feeling soon. According to one of the refugees, “*I think I do have some sort of sense of belonging to Norway, and I experienced this whenever I traveled abroad because, on my return, I felt comfortable at home*” (Interview 3).

According to one of the refugees, children develop feelings of ownership and belonging sooner than adults. Children go to school, make friends and build social networks among other children in the neighborhood. “*Refugee families come to Norway in their thirties,*” and it will take time to get used to a new life, but their “*children can easily integrate from the first days while attending the same kindergarten and school as Norwegians*” (Interview 8).

Despite that, some interviewees lived a short period in Norway, and their sense of belonging to Norwegian society is developing faster than others.

- Trusting system

Some interviewees believe that understanding and trusting the system of the hosting country is crucial for developing a feeling of ownership and belonging. For example, if refugees learn the language and find a job, they can vote. Voting is important for some interviewees because they feel you have freedom of choice and affect an election’s result. Trusting a democratic system and taking part in decision-making give interviewees more confidence, and they want to see themselves as an active part of society. “*As a new person in this society, I have the right to vote for any party in this democratic system. I trust the system, and I am sure that privileges like voting rights are seriously considered*” (Interview 5).

- Uncertainty and doubtfulness

Some interviewees' feelings lie in the twilight, and they are uncertain about their belonging. Still, they develop some kind of togetherness when they are with their Norwegian friends. Some interviewees believe that listening to news and following social media help understand what is going on in the country. During the interview, the interviewees were asked to explain how they are uncertain about developing feelings of belonging. An interviewee explained that he does his utmost to adapt to Norwegian society by having more friends and learning the language and local codes. Despite all efforts, sometimes hearing some expression can be irritable, says an interviewee:

“During the pandemic, I heard so many times the term “Norsk fødte innvandrere,⁸” which makes me think that the people who were born here with immigrant families have not been accepted as Norwegians, so it is hard to believe that I belong here as a newcomer” (Interview 4).

The development of feelings of belonging and ownership is also two-way interaction. This means that we are on one side trying to develop feelings, and on the other side, the native residents of the hosting country. How residents perceive new refugees in their country can affect the development of a sense of belonging and ownership. Despite that, some refugees develop strong feelings regarding ownership and belonging, but some interviewees still doubt some Norwegians' perceptions about refugees. *“The critical question is that I feel my belonging to a new society is growing, but how about the feeling of Norwegians against me. Am I accepted as a part of their society?” (Interview 5).*

Some interviewees are skeptical regarding ownership and belonging and explain this as time taking, especially regarding cultural and religious obstacles and prejudice. Furthermore, not all Norwegians are happy to build relations with refugees, especially when they are from the Muslim community. To feel that you are not welcomed can affect one's feelings. There will be less motivation to work harder to develop feelings of ownership and belonging in a community that affects emotions.

⁸ Norskfødte innvandrere = Norwegian-born immigrants, author's translation.

“We feel little belonging in Norwegian society. Because our backgrounds as Muslims and refugees often become an obstacle to this. Norwegians are not so open to contacting a person with the above background. So we always have to take the initiative to start a relationship” (Interview 6).

Refugees need more freedom to develop a sense of belonging. An interviewee said that it is important to maintain good communication with locals. But he is not sure about the activities planned under the introduction program. For example, to go for a walk or similar activities. Refugees should develop the feeling of freedom first, thinks an interviewee. This is because human beings stop being creative and react against forces used on them, especially when forced to do something unwillingly. *“It is a weird feeling that I have; for instance, I still donot believe that my own car is my property, though it is paid off”* (Interview 7).

Four advisors of the introduction program shared their views regarding the question to compare and understand how refugees can develop their sense of belonging and ownership. Having a job can be the first step toward developing feelings of belonging and ownership, and a job provides economical means and gives stability to the whole family. Some advisors think that access to material facilities can increase feelings of belonging and ownership. They believe if a refugee has a job, it can be helpful to buy a house for them. Owning a house will develop feelings of belonging. In addition to that owning a house provides security to the person and his family. *“To own your own house includes a lot of responsibilities, and it means that you are mature and able to take care of a house and be independent of others”* (Interview 11). Contrary to the material access, some advisors believe that the social and non-tangible parts help refugees improve their sense of ownership and belonging to society. *“Having friends and participating in work life or social life in the community”* (Interview 13).

6.2.3 Best Practices and Experiences

This section focuses on refugees’ best practices and experiences during their time in Norway. Refugees have been asked about their best practices and experiences that helped them achieve satisfactory results. Furthermore, four advisors of the introduction program were also asked to answer the question differently about how they think refugees can achieve their goals. Refugees who participated in the interview responded to questions, and some answers were brief, but some interviewees reflected with more details on the asked question. This part mainly elaborates on how effective planning and setting goals helped refugees achieve their goals.

What were the learning techniques used by refugees to master learning the language, social codes, building a network, finding a good job, taking care of their children, and how did refugees obtain their higher education in Norway? Not all refugees have a positive experience of being integrated easily, yet they continue to struggle in the new society regarding integration. Refugees share all these experiences and best practices to elaborate on how they adapted to the new environment. Proper planning helps them achieve realistic goals and set some targets to succeed in the future. Therefore, an interviewee believes that learning Norwegian was a prioritized goal for him and followed certain activities to achieve it. *“I attended courses, language cafes, volunteer activities, and prioritized following certain efforts which helped me improve my language skills and learn the Norwegian language” (Interview 3).*

Despite the municipality providing a comprehensive program for refugees to learn the language and cultural studies, there is a need for hard work by refugees. When refugees have enthusiasm, it will help them find different sources and activities to learn and eventually achieve their goals. A combination of good planning with a hard-working ethic and willingness can lead to an even better result, says an interviewee.

“I understood that a person with enthusiasm and working hard would achieve those realistic goals. We build a good network with other Norwegian families under the program that, in turn, help us better understand how Norwegian families with children take care of their children and family” (Interview 5).

Furthermore, to learn a new language, it is important to focus on courses offered by the introduction program and alternative sources to learn both language and society knowledge faster. For example, sources such as newspapers, books, magazines, listening to the radio and watching TV, and attending short-term courses besides the introduction program courses have been helpful. Practicing language through different activities can be another technique to master a language. *“For me, the best experience was attending to Norwegian course offered by NTNU. Although it was a short-term offered course, it was useful for me, while my wife’s best experience was talking with Norwegian women on various topics” (Interview 6).* Additionally, an interviewee said refugees participate in volunteer organization activities that assist the refugees in learning the language. *“The best thing is that I got the opportunity to become a*

language assistant at the Red Cross, which gave me a lot of chance to get to know more people, and the effort is still helping” (Interview 9).

Creating a network will help refugee families take care of their children and know the family’s rights and obligations towards their children. Some interviewees believe that not everything is given under the introduction program. When refugees establish contact with other Norwegian families with small children, they learn how to practice and apply all the learned knowledge to raise their children in the Norwegian context. For example, what children like to do on weekends, how to find cheap clothes for children, whom to contact if they need help, and how to apply to receive extra support from (NAV) when it comes to sports activities for their children. Good social networks also pave the way for finding a job. Many refugees in the interview expressed that they found a temporary job and later permanent position through Norwegian friends, international organizations, and volunteer work. An interviewee said that having a job also helps refugees be confident, and in return, it helps expand their social network. *“I worked as a volunteer at many places. It helped me network and understand society, but the important thing is finding the volunteer organization or a job that fits a person’s background” (Interview 4).* Another interviewee said, *“I started working as a volunteer for a year which eventually led to a paid job” (Interview 1).* Interviewee 3 said, *“internship in a school and working as an assistant was beneficial to learn more about the Norwegian school system and its environment.”*

“...While I have worked as an intern to get the experience, I feel like there has been a good connection in helping me understand the situations better. Now I have a paid job. We eat together in a group, and my colleagues have good teamwork and collaboration, and we all help each other and cooperate effectively...” (Interview 8).

Another interviewee believes that sometimes it’s good to believe in your instincts. *“My best experience was applying for a job after improving my language skills and trusting my abilities; as a result, I got the job” (Interview 10).* Another aspect expressed as a best practice and success was obtaining higher education in Norway. Many refugees struggle to get their education papers approved by NOKUT, and many reasons in the local context prevent approval by the Norwegian educational system (Aftenposten, 2021). But some foreign educations get approval from NOKUT. An interviewee expressed his happiness about getting approval for his education

documents in Norway. *“I got my university degree accredited by NOKUT during the introduction program, which saved me a lot of time”* (Interview 1).

Some refugees are still struggling to achieve their goals under the introduction program and have not yet been satisfied with their results. It may be due to the short period they lived in Norway or how they chose to pursue their objectives. An interviewee said that he is happy to have at least security in Norway despite not achieving his objectives.

“I have not achieved satisfactory results yet, and I think several factors influence it. The only thing I have achieved is the safety and stability of my family, but it is still insufficient. I guess everyone has their own way of practicing and experiencing life challenges and obstacles” (Interview 6).

During the interview with advisors, they expressed their thoughts that getting a job is the ultimate objective. *“Those who succeed in finding a job can improve their language and earn money, and they can sustain their families economically and contribute to the general welfare system as taxpayers”* (Interview 12). Expanding social networks is another area where refugees find their way to integrate effectively. An advisor believes that people get to know each other through social networks and eventually create a good life in Norway. *“I always encourage the participants in the introduction program to find social activities where they meet Norwegians. The key to living a good life in Norway is to develop a social network where you can practice speaking Norwegian.”* The advisor also meant that those with at least one or two Norwegian-speaking friends have a lot more chance to speak better Norwegian, get a job, and *“be integrated into the community”* (Interview 13).

6.2.4 Application of gained knowledge in the field

In this question, I wanted to find answers on how participants of the introduction program used their gained knowledge from the introduction program to work, from the internship to voluntary work, and from participating in the community to whatever they have learned so far in Norway has helped them. Advisors also shared their point of view regarding how participants applied their gained knowledge in their daily and working life and what it means to practice the gained insights from the advisors’ perspective. The question asked about how you apply it in your work was difficult for participants to understand, so I had to simplify it with the abovementioned points. Interviewees shared their experiences about how their learnings in the

field are used, especially in finding a job, creating a social network for their family, taking care of children, understanding the system function, and many more. Most interviewees believe that the introduction program helped them to learn the language, understand the social context in Norway, and to find a job in the market (Interviews 2, 3, 5, and 6)

For example, one of the interviewees used his knowledge of the introduction program and his own experience of his first years in Norway to help newcomers integrate into the new society. The interviewee works in an organization that provides courses to newly arrived refugees in Norway. It was insightful to hear his experience about how he focused on compiling quality information for newcomers based on their background. He has shared relevant information on opportunities in Norway and how they can benefit from them as effectively and as efficiently as possible to get their ideal jobs and become economically independent. He believes it is important that those refugees who have stayed in Norway for a year should share their best practices with the new ones and become role models to other refugees. He said, *“Part of my work is developing courses for newcomer refugees in Norway. I use myself as an example when I elaborate on opportunities in Norway as successful integration”* (Interview 1).

One of the program’s objectives is to provide refugees with the needed knowledge and skills to enter the job market. However, this objective is not fulfilled in some cases, and as a result, not all refugees can achieve their goals after completing the introduction program. An interviewer feels that he could not find a job despite completing the introduction program and continues to apply for jobs on the internet. *“Honestly, I have had limited chances to find a job. I think learning the language was the most important achievement, so thanks to speaking Norwegian, at least I can apply for jobs”* (Interview 4).

The introduction program has helped refugees understand children’s rights. A new refugee family needs to know their parent’s rights and obligations when taking care of children. Under the introduction program, parents receive courses to learn about parental responsibility and how to grow children in Norway. There are consequences if parents have irresponsible behavior, so the training in the introduction program teaches how much freedom should be given to children to discipline them. A refugee father who has been in the introduction program shares his experience in this regard. *“We learned about rights and obligations regarding family and to take care of children. Later the knowledge has been used to take care of children and their needs in kindergarten, school, sports, and social activities”* (Interview 5).

Advisors think that refugees should be courageous and apply for the job. Despite it being challenging to get a job in a highly competitive environment for a refugee, nothing is impossible. Refugees should be brave and not let negative thoughts demotivate them to work. Some refugees may think that they would not be able to work; they may be afraid. According to one of the advisors, even when refugees get a job, some are very concerned about doing their jobs and even forget to get socialized with the rest of their colleagues in the dining room.

“I think it is good to be brave, and when people apply for work whether they worry about being able to do the job. I know some refugees when they get a job and then they so concerned in doing their job and when the break comes they are tired, and they do not want to eat with others, and it’s important in Norway to sit with your colleagues, eat food, socialize with each other” (Interview 11).

6.2.5 Challenges Regarding Integration

This part will focus on answering the question about the challenges of integration, so the participants share relevant ideas about the main challenges for refugees regarding their integration. Integration of refugees is a complex and pretty difficult question to answer. Refugees face many challenges in the integration process, such as limited human capital, weak social networks, language, cultural barriers, and system and policy-related shortcomings. According to interviewee 1, lack of educational credentials, language barriers, and difficulties in establishing a social network with other people, specifically with native Norwegians, are the main challenges refugees face daily, starting during the introduction program. Despite that, the community and other organizations coordinate their efforts to facilitate the integration process, but refugees still have problems being self-sufficient and economically independent. Furthermore, interviewee 1 believes that developing a feeling of responsibility for their society is another area a refugee should work on.

Interviewees (1, 8, and 10) believe that language is the main barrier to integration. For them, refugees must work hard to use different resources to learn. For example, reading newspapers, watching TV, and trying to talk in Norwegian to neighbors and friends in daily conversation and knowing the language improves their chances of being employed in a job. Additionally, different Norwegian dialects are another challenge that makes it hard for refugees to understand

conversational language, “no matter how hard we try to learn Bokmål⁹, the understanding spoken language with different dialects is a big challenge” (Interview 8).

Furthermore, lack of digital competence is another area where both men and women from refugee backgrounds face challenges. Living in a society where everything is digitized, starting from a residence permit and passport, applying for kindergarten, school, and social help is challenging. In such an environment, knowing systems and having digital competence will help refugees become more independent in their daily lives (Interview 8).

- Finding Jobs

Interviewee (9) said it is challenging for a refugee to find a job. “*Finding the first job is a challenging situation refugees experience.*” Employers prefer to hire a Norwegian than a refugee. Although refugees often meet the required qualification and criteria for the announced job, they will not be given jobs by Norwegian employers. There might be different reasons why public and private organizations are skeptical of employing refugees, but this research does not discuss the causes of their employment. The labor market has great prejudices against refugees. “*Even though I am qualified, I experienced discrimination in many jobs I applied for, and there were few calls for an interview*” (Interview 6).

According to the interviewees (10 and 4), “*women with Muslim backgrounds*” in finding jobs face more challenges than refugee men. There is a perception that women with “*hijab*” are not welcomed and have faced discrimination. Some refugees struggle to get permanent employment and think they lose many employment benefits without permanent work, such as holidays and paternity leaves with payment.

Added to this, it was an insightful discussion that integration problems lie both in the refugees and on the hosting side. For example, an advisor believes that refugees replicate their homeland culture here in Norway, especially when women stay home and care for their children. In addition, frequent births of children in the family prevent mothers from learning a language, completing school, and finding a job (Interview 12). With more children, these families with refugee backgrounds gradually face economic problems, which means they can not properly

⁹ Bokmål and Nynorsk = Are the official written standard for the Norwegian language. Author’s translation.

maintain their children's needs. Having more women in the labor market will help the family and help society, believes the interviewee (12).

- Start all over due to not having the approval of the education documents in Norway acquired back home

Another significant challenge for some refugees interviewed was the non-recognition of their education documents from their homelands (Interviewees 2, 4, and 8). In addition, when refugees come to Norway with higher education, there are high chances that their education documents are partially approved or wholly rejected. Refugees have a slight chance of getting their education paper completely certified (Interview 1, 2).

- Poor Social Network

Refugees need to enhance and improve their social networks. According to interviewees (1 and 3), refugees have poor social networks, and therefore it is the refugees' need to socialize in society. Although refugees want to interact, but it is hard to engage with Norwegians due to their cultural or private situation (Interview 3). If neither Norwegians nor the refugees do not initiate building an interaction while living in the same society, then the integration process will not be effective. According to the interviewee (13), Norway has fewer meeting places where people from different backgrounds could come together and spend time. *"It is difficult to make a friendship with Norwegians as there are not enough social meeting places"* (Interview 13).

Racism and prejudice

Another challenge in the way of integration of refugees is racism and prejudice. An interviewee believes that there is racism, and it is better to talk about and admit this issue honestly instead of hiding it. *"One of the challenges I experienced was hidden racism among Norwegians in Norway"* (Interview 4). The problem gets even more profound when you realize that people do not want you at the workplace because of your background. The media strengthens negative thoughts about refugees in society, believes the interviewee 6. This can lead to more segregation and exclusion of refugees—for example, headlines in the newspapers or a biased report published by the Norwegian media.

Some interviewees believe that politicians use refugees as a playing card to win their arguments and use the opportunity for their party politics. According to the interviewee (6), *"The*

politicians in the FRP¹⁰ party want us to return to our home country. Only nonsense is experienced when the FRP party uses refugees as a card during the yearly budget negotiations". Suppose refugees feel they are being used as a tool and excluded from society due to discrimination and prejudice. In that case, the integration process is disrupted, and feelings of alienation and abandonment will be created among refugees and causing thoughts to be diverted in a twisted way against the integration process. Such beliefs will divide society and be perceived as a significant obstacle to the integration of refugees (Interview 5).

6.2.6 Summary

The overall discussion in this section was about refugees' integration and sense of belonging in Norwegian society. Fourteen interviewees (ten refugees and four program advisors) shared their reflections by answering the interview questionnaire. The participants believe that improving feelings of ownership and sense of belonging is a complex process that takes a long time. Complexity also depends on a refugee's perception of Norway's society and the environment where a refugee lives and has built during their transition and settled. Two program advisors said, "*some adapt to the new society faster than other refugees.*" According to the interviewed refugees, integration and their sense of belonging are two-way processes requiring refugees and the Norwegian society's efforts. They believe when refugees learn the language and social codes, establish a network, find a job, and become taxpayers just like everyone else, they must be accepted and receive the required attention from the people of the hosting country. Additionally, interviewed refugees mentioned that if the people of the hosting country neglect and refuse to accept refugees as members of society, then the integration process has failed to function well. Having a job and being economically independent, which has resulted that a person having a position in society, has been mentioned several times by both refugees and the program advisors. According to the participants, the sense of belonging and integration starts when a person has invested and utilized resources effectively and worked hard to achieve certain goals, which has resulted in having a job, "*integration and belonging means having a job.*" Some interviewees said that living with one's values and keeping their own culture and traditions besides the Norwegian culture is crucial for them and their children. They want to preserve their language and culture while also wanting to learn a new culture. For some interviewees, besides having a job, learning the language, establishing a network, being an active member of society, and participating in volunteer activities are equally important in

¹⁰ Fremskrittspartiet = The Progress Party is a liberal people's party in Norway. Author's translation.

establishing a sense of belonging and successfully integrating into the Norwegian society. According to the program advisors, best practices mean that when a refugee has utilized the provided opportunity to learn the Norwegian language and find a job, they are aware of the country's culture and how its system functions. For the refugees, best practices mean that some got lucky; their education documents got approved, they learned the language, and they found a job. Some participants with children built their network within the neighborhood and learned how to take care of children within a local context. It is also important to mention that some participants were not satisfied with their achievements yet. Refugees shared their experiences on how they used to gain knowledge from the introduction program in the field. First, they learn the Norwegian language, basic rules in the country, and social codes under the program. Secondly, those who have established contact with other families know how to benefit from family-friendly advice. Program advisors expect refugees to be brave, accept challenges, apply for jobs, and socialize with colleagues in the office environment. Despite the interviewees' benefits and achievements, they still think that challenges exist that need to be addressed. Challenges such as finding a job, disapproval of education papers from their countries, poor social networks, racism, and prejudice, were the most important mentioned by refugees, among other points that interviewees reflected on.

6.3 Role of Housing for Refugees Integration

6.3.1 What does owning a house mean for you?

The word house has both material and spiritual values among the participants. The interviewed people answered the question and used both house and home interchangeably by saying that a home is a place where one develops their identity, grows up, lives together, invests, and it gives stability, happiness, belonging, and security. In addition to that, home plays an essential role in knowing people who live around, especially neighbors.

“The house I own is my home; it is where my heart is” (Interview 11). Interviewees reflected on the subjective meaning of what owning a house meant for them. According to the participants, their home is their private space. Individuals learn from each other, practice their culture in their homes, and expect their privacy to be respected.

- Owning a house increases feelings of belonging and ownership

According to some interviewees, owning a house increases their feelings of ownership and belonging to society. Owning a house means that a person lives in a permanent address, lives in that area, and avoids frequent moving from one place to another (Interviews 1 and 3). One interviewee said, *“owning a house means that I belong in the neighborhood and enjoy the surroundings and nature of the area.”*(Interview 3).

- Owning a house creates happiness

Interviewees shared their thoughts about owning a house and meaning that having a house can contribute to happiness. First, one who rents a place is constantly worried about being free from the landlord. *“Owning a house can take off the stress”* from the people who rent houses, who are always concerned about where to move if the landlord will get their house back (Interview 1). Interviewees 5 and 2 believe that owning a house is essential for their happiness and satisfaction. They justify that they are accepted, relaxed at home, and forget their daily troubles for a while at the end of the day. Therefore, *“owning a house gives us a good feeling in our lives.”*

- Children and adults build bonds and social network

When families own a house and live permanently, both adults and children establish social networks at kindergarten, school, and work. It is because humans are social creatures and want to be in contact with other people. Interviewees 5, 6, and 8 believe that owning a house gives a

family a stable situation and helps them raise their children in the neighborhood. Individuals can concentrate on long-term planning if they own a house. In addition, this long-term planning will also lead to building and strengthening bonds in the neighborhood. Both adults and children need someone or some group of people to be with, making the integration process easier for refugees. When people have their own house, they feel they belong, can live in that area, and build strong bonds. Home means a lot for families with children, and they develop relations and friendships with people in the area regardless of fear of moving to other places frequently.

- Owning a house and individual economy

Owning a house in Norway means one can make a good “*investment.*” If one can apply for bank credit and buy a house, buying it is better than renting it. People can save money by paying house installments, and it will be a good investment for the future from an economic perspective (Interviews 2 and 9).

- Advisors’ perspective on owning a house

Three out of four program advisors have similar reflections about owning a house, while one of the advisors (interviewee 14) believes “*owning a house to earn wealth is a lazy investment.*” According to him, many people in Norway buy houses and rent them to earn income, which is not a smart idea to invest handsome amounts of money through bank mortgages.

One of the advisors believes that home is where we have our physical and emotional values like memories, happiness, dreams, books, and pictures. “*The house I own is my home; it is where my heart is*”; *it is stability, a place of family, joy, love, memories, meals and books, pictures, music, plans and dreams, and everyday life with its ups and downs.*” It is also work and house chores like cleaning, washing, cooking, and caring. It is also gardening, having beauty around during summertime, and maintenance of the house is important; it always needs some upgrading to be painted, cleaned, and protected. With the tough climate in Norway, the house always needs maintenance. In addition, services are too expensive to come to the house, so everyone should have basic “*maintenance skills such as carpentry, painting, and cement work.*” Owning a house is also a “*sign of responsibility*”; without owning your place to live, you depend on renting from others (Interview 11).

According to interviewee 12, owning a house means security and a way to build a fortune for the next generation. Having a house will ensure that “*our children have a place to live in.*”

Advisors also agree with the perception that owning a house creates and increases a sense of belonging in a community. *“Belonging comes when we feel secure in a place and not worried.”* For children, it means stability, and they go to school and develop good relationships with friends at the school (Interview 13). When an individual owns a house, people in the neighborhood create close contact with the person. Furthermore, the interviewee (13) said culturally, in Norway, when people reach the age of 30 or 35 years, it is quite usual that they own their own house. While in Sweden, it is common to rent a house or apartment. In Norway, with all the possibilities and the permanent job, if a person still does not own a house, then it is quite strange and shows that person did not work well to use the available opportunities. At the same time, this issue is quite contrary in Sweden.

From an economic perspective, advisors agree with refugees regarding the economic advantages of owning a house. Interviewees 11, 12, and 13 believe that by owning a house and having a mortgage, an individual pays rent to the bank and avoids higher taxation. *“Owning a house is economically smart, as you will pay your house rent to yourself”* instead of another house owner. Having a bank loan is beneficiary taxwise, and the house’s value is increasing every year, allowing you to be a part of the general increase in living conditions of Norway (Interview 11).

6.3.2 Role of Housing to Become Part of the Norwegian Society

This part focuses on finding how interviewees perceive the role of housing to be part of Norwegian society. Eleven out of fourteen participants shared their reflections about the question (eight refugees and three advisors). The rest of the interviewees (one advisor and three refugees) answered the question by saying that they had no comments.

- Owning a house creates confidence among refugees

Participants who answered the question mostly believe that housing has an important role in integrating into society (Interviews 1, 2, 3, and 11). First, it strengthens individuals’ feelings of belonging to the neighborhood (Interviews 1, 5, 8, 10, and 11).

Interviewee 1 said that having a house means being accepted by neighbors as *“permanent residents”* in the area rather than looking at you as someone who has rented a place for a while and later may move out. In addition, the interviewee believes that owning a house gives

refugees confidence because they get status and think of themselves as equal members of society. It encourages refugees to participate more in the job market and increase their income, leading to economic independence.

According to an advisor, she believes that locals will also be eager to know you when they notice someone has permanently moved into their neighborhood (Interview 12). Furthermore, it will increase people's engagement and relation to the local community. Owning a house is a suitable property for families where their kids find permanent friends and continue their friendship without worrying about moving from the neighborhood soon. It can create intimacy and a friendly environment among neighbors. Children find new friends in school by improving their friendship after school and even straightening friendships between families (Interview 5).

- Owning a house is not enough

According to interviewee 3, refugees should do their utmost and be more active in society besides owning a house. Owning a house in Norway will give you the feeling that you have become part of the society; however, together with having a house, refugees need to have a relationship with the Norwegian society and be proactive members of the community.

An advisor also believes that most people in Norway prioritize owning a house and owning one. *"Buying a house can be considered part of the integration."* Still, it requires a high degree of *"understanding of the Norwegian governmental system and society"* so other constituents can help refugees together by owning a house become part of the Norwegian society as a resident (Interview 14).

Another advisor believes that integration is way beyond owning a house, and it depends on how you take care of your house that indicates your part in the society (Interview 11). She believes that despite that owning a house is important in people's lives in Norwegian society, one should be concerned about how they take care of the house. People need to follow the flow of how things are done and *"respect the available values in the community."* Her thoughts are as follows, and she thinks anyone owning a house must observe them.

“... You have to be concerned about when people pass your house. What does it look like? Does it look welcoming or nice, or are you a person who does not care about other people? Is it messy, closed, or unfriendly? Do you really understand the garbage system? Or, when you pass in front of your house, people will notice that this house belongs to a refugee...” (Interview 11).

The advisor believes there could be many differences in traditions, but caring about outside of your house is a “*valued tradition in Norway.*” In addition, many refugees live in the municipal house when they come to Norway, and they do not get used to taking care of the garden because they do not own it. In the meantime, it does not mean that all refugees would not have a house as described. Some refugees have been very proactive, utilized their opportunities quite well, and achieved exemplary accomplishments (Interview 11).

- It is up to us how well we understand the integration process

For some refugees owning a house does not have a direct link to becoming part of Norwegian society. It depends on how the person prefers to be part of society. Interviewee 4 shares his story of living in a reception center and where he has had quite a difficult situation. After his application was approved, he was given a refugee status, then moved from the reception center in one of the local municipalities in the Trondheim region to the apartment rented for him. He said, although it is not easy for refugees to live in Norway when it comes to acceptance by residents, refugees can manage to their position in the neighborhood

“... I mean, maybe some people do not want me in the society, I am in the society, I have a place in a Norwegian neighborhood. The situation encouraged me to join social life and represent myself as a new inhabitant...” (Interview 4).

Norwegians understand owning a house as an expectation, which would mean success. However, even owning a house does not necessarily mean refugees become more accepted. Interviewee 6 believes there is “*no difference between owning or renting a house.*” He believes that despite owning a house, he still struggles to affiliate with Norwegian society.

6.3.3 Introduction Program's Help in Owning a House

Housing and its role in refugees' integration into Norwegian society is one of the main topics of this thesis. How does the introduction program help refugees own a house? With this question, I aimed to know the perspective of advisors and the refugees to reflect on the topic. Fourteen interviewees (ten participants and four advisors) answered the question to explain whether there is any linkage with the introduction program in helping refugees to buy a house.

The immediate answer of all interviewees was that the introduction program does not help refugees buy a house. However, interviewees believe the introduction program lays the foundation for the future and general knowledge about life in Norway. Suppose the opportunity is utilized effectively, just like any other person in the community. In that case, refugees know the language, have pursued their higher education in Norway, found a job, and fulfilled the credit criteria to receive start loans from a bank. According to the refugees and the advisors, since the introduction program is the first offered opportunity for refugees after settling in a municipality, they answered the question by saying that an indirect link will open the window of opportunity later along the way.

An interviewee said, "... *the introduction salary is not enough for most refugees in most municipalities to buy a house or an apartment...*" (Interview 1). However, some municipalities in Norway have initiatives that help refugees (including those who go to the introduction program) by providing housing loans to individuals (Interviews 1 and 11). The initiative mainly focuses on refugees with children; refugees are also given a chance to stay in municipalities with a low population density. Some interviewees believe this initiative is positive and helps refugees own a house.

"... We want refugees to stay in X municipality, and that's why they are prioritized for receiving start-up loans from the housing bank to buy their own house. As soon as eligible refugees have a secure income, they can apply for start-up mortgages..." (Interview 12).

According to Interviewee 11, it may take years for a refugee to buy a house without municipal financial support. Still, when people buy their own house and have a job, this will eventually speed up the integration process.

6.3.4 Ideal Housing

This part focuses on the choices and preferences of refugees and advisors regarding housing: What factors do they consider when they want to live in or own a house. In addition, what makes refugees feel comfortable is the context and reality of the area in which they live in. I asked, “what is your ideal house?”. Twelve out of fourteen interviewees (eight participants and four advisors) answered the question.

One of the important parts that interviewees reflected upon when it comes to an adequate ideal house is having enough space. With enough space, they mean having at least sleeping rooms (based on the size of their families), living rooms, a kitchen, and a car garage (Interviews 1, 3, 5, and 12). Furthermore, the ideal house means having space where individuals can keep in contact with their children and grandchildren. An ideal house is a place where individuals can experience their shared memories of the past and appreciate life. It is always satisfying when grown-up children come to visit in their old home. One of the interviewees said:

“...An ideal house is where I can stay a long time during different stages of life while the family changes from having small children to grown-up children who come back to visit. I want the house to be a home for them as they bring their children back to visit. A house is a home, and home consists of memories, dreams, hopes, everyday life, and everything...” (Interview 11).

It is important for interviewees where they live. One of the key points in the answers is the neighborhood. Interviewees stressed that neighborhood plays an important role in the well-being and happiness of individuals (Interviews 2 and 6). “...*Neighborhood is also very important for me as I am naturally a calm guy and do not disturb anyone. I take great care and respect others’ rights and privacy, so I expect the same...*” (Interview 2).

The children-friendly environment is another priority when choosing a good house for interviewees (Interviews 5, 6, and 10). For example, interviewees said they prefer to live with their family near school, kindergarten, and a playground for small children. “...*It is practical to live near facilities children need in their daily lives...*” Additionally, the interviewee 10 said he prefers a small garden in his house where he can grow vegetables, and it gives him feelings of enjoyment and relaxation.

Interviewees look at the practicality and easy access to amenities such as public transportation, food store, market, school, and kindergartens. Living close to big cities and access to the local public transport gives many advantages to refugees. Therefore, interviewees include the facilities mentioned above in their wish lists.

Some prefer a house, but some prefer an apartment (Interviews 4 and 5). It depends on the need of the interviewees. Therefore, they have their reasons for wanting a house or an apartment. One of the main reasons is family size: *“I prefer to live in an apartment building as I used to. I live in a 55 m² house now, and it is enough for my wife and me. But if we had children, I would need to have a bigger one”* (Interview 4).

Some interviewees want the house to have an outside view, a nice outdoor view of the ocean, and having a house near the ocean is satisfying and gives calmness and satisfaction. In Norway, most living areas are along the coast, and the ocean surrounds cities. According to an interviewee, the house should have a nice outdoor view, for example, close to the ocean with at least three bedrooms. *“...I feel optimistic about my life when I see the ocean in front of me...”* (Interview 8).

The advisors were satisfied with the house they currently owned and wanted to keep. It is close to the amenities such as a workplace, public spaces, supermarkets, schools, and a kindergarten. One of the advisors said, *“...I guess the one I own is an ideal and adequate house...”* (Interview 14).

6.3.5 Summary

According to interviewees, housing has an important role in refugees' integration. Owning a house gives security, happiness, belonging, financial capability, and stability and creates a social network for adults and children in the Norwegian neighborhood. The participants have a positive interpretation of owning a house. When individuals possess a house, they live in one place and can save their money by paying the mortgage. According to interviewees, they pay fewer taxes when paying the bank mortgage. Furthermore, owning a house ensures that refugee families and their children have a place to live without worrying about moving constantly. Owning a house increases refugees' confidence and sense of belonging in the neighborhood. Some interviewees believe that in addition to owning a house, refugees can take other initiatives to expedite their integration into Norwegian society. For instance, individuals should have a job, establish relations with the local community and attend volunteer activities arranged in the society. Additionally, having a house is considered a sign of responsibility, and one should maintain the house as others do to respect local norms and culture. Considering all these factors by refugees helps enhance the feeling of belonging in the neighborhood. Some interviewees believe there is no direct link between the introduction program assisting refugees in owning a house. Still, it builds fundament upon which participants can build their future in Norway. When a participant finds a job and becomes economically self-sufficient, they can apply for a loan from the bank to buy a house. Sustainable and permanent jobs give an advantage to the individuals to buy a house in Norway. Some municipalities have initiatives that help individuals (including those in the introduction program) buy a house. First of all, these initiatives cover families with children and refugees. All participants have a common opinion that the program facilitates criteria and eligibility for refugees to buy their houses in the long run. According to certain interviewees, individuals should establish stronger bonds and friendships with others without being the owner of a house to integrate effectively into society. Refugees and advisors' have similar preferences and choices about an ideal house. For instance, size, outdoor view, access to amenities, public transportation, and child-friendly neighborhood were standard features of owning or buying a house.

6.4 Participants' Suggestions

Once the interviews ended, I was interested to know if the participants had further suggestions that could be relevant and contribute positively to this research. From the 14 interviewees, one program advisor and four refugees suggested some points. The rest of the six refugees and three program advisors answered the question by saying no and that they had nothing else to add, and the interviews ended. As a result, the interviewees mentioned the following reflections and suggested points.

According to interviewee 3, the introduction program is the first and foremost offered opportunity for refugees when granted asylum in Norway. He suggested that if only this research could only focus on the impacts of the introduction program, and then the findings of the research would have been more relevant to his situation since he was new in Norway. *“I do not have a house now, and it may take some years before I feel myself at home in Norway, so I suggest you focus only on the introduction program and its role in refugees' integration.”*

Another participant suggested that if this research could have reflected some points about the values of family life. He said that people live collectively and support each other in the family where I come from. Here life is too individualized; *“you are alone, and hard to see that you do not have a family like others in society” (Interview 4).*

Interviewee 6 appreciated that such research is being conducted about refugees. Still, during the interview, he often criticized the quality of language courses offered for refugees in the adult learning centers since language is one of the main objectives of the introduction program to offer Norwegian language classes for newly arrived refugees. *“I suggest more research be conducted about the quality of Norwegian language training offered for refugees and must be evaluated by the authorities” (Interview 6).*

Interviewee 8 suggested that the result of the research will be insightful if refugee families are included and if the research question is asked from them as well. He believes that families with children have different lives, and they have other priorities for their kids to grow up and be educated. *“I am single; you can find out the common grounds and differences from various perspectives if you include refugee families in your research” (Interview 8).*

According to a program advisor, an introduction program is a primary tool within a short period. Topics such as belonging, housing, and neighborhoods require the perspective of many years of refugee life. She was interested in knowing the perspective of those refugees who have completed the enrollment in the introduction program and how the integration efforts impacted refugees' lives after many years. She suggested that similar research should be conducted to study the life of old refugees who have been in Norway for some years. *"The process of belonging in a community could start when people buy their own house and have a job, requiring more than five to six years"* (Interview 11).

6.5 A Local Resident's Perspective on Refugees

This research acknowledges that the feedback of inhabitants in the local community was highly appreciated to understand residents' perspectives about refugees living in their neighborhoods. As a result, an interview was conducted with one of the Norwegian residents where refugees are settled in their neighborhood. Contrary to the way interviews were conducted with other participants in this research, the semi-structured interview differed from the interview topics created for this research. The purpose of the thesis and the main research question are explained during the interview; then, I asked random questions to know his perspectives regarding refugees living in the interviewee's neighborhood. Interview 15 was conducted with a male member of a Norwegian family, and his reflection does not represent the perspective of all the inhabitants in the area. According to him, life is too different here in Norway; people are busy and used to such a way of living as they grow up. He said, *"I try to understand refugees' life, and it must be difficult for them to adjust to this robotic life."* He often only gets a chance to say hi to the neighbors, which could sometimes be forgotten. In addition, he thinks that refugees lack certain knowledge about Norwegian neighborhoods, and it's difficult for him to explain the situation. He was unsure if there was anything in the system to transfer some cultural codes or maintain a connection between a refugee or a Norwegian family.

"I feel sorry when I see that they struggle a lot, learning the language, running toward a bus stop to catch a bus, and living with the fear of not making any mistakes or being too careful. Start with a completely new life in a different environment, challenging weather, and less participation in the community gatherings, schools, and kindergartens. All this must be hard for refugees to adjust" (Interview 15).

7. FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

The case study chapter presented the process and impacts of the Norwegian introduction program for refugees' integration, the sense of belonging of refugees in the Norwegian society, and the role of housing for refugees integration in Norway, especially in the Trondheim region. The objective was to explore factors related to the integration of refugees concerning their education, employment, cultural knowledge, integration program for refugees, housing, and sense of belonging of refugees in the Norwegian society to be part of the local community. This section will present my major findings from the case study about the integration of refugees. I will compare them with the adopted conceptual framework of integration (Ager and Strang, 2008) and the literature review. Through this, I will highlight opportunities and challenges, and, finally, implications for practice and research will be presented.

7.1 Findings

As Penninx and Garcés-Mascreñas (2016) mentioned, integration is a two-way process where individuals become an accepted part of society that requires the interaction of refugees and the hosting country. According to the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE, 2002), the integration of refugees is a change process requiring three main steps (1 dynamic and two-way, 2 long-term, and 3 multi-dimensional). Step one, a dynamic and two-way process, requires refugees and the concerned hosting countries to plan, communicate and collaborate. In this process, the integration of refugees requires them a demanding start to learn and adapt to the hosting nation's lifestyle. In response, the hosting societies should facilitate the opportunity and the needed resources. Step two, as the long-term process, integration of refugees, is linked with their psychological perspective starting from the first day until they become active members of the hosting society based on the domestic laws of the host country. Step three, integration of refugees as a multi-dimensional process, requires refugees' active participation in every aspect of the hosting nation's programs and policies, such as economic, social, cultural, civil, and political life. In addition, my findings in the case study chapter through interviews revealed that effectively utilizing offered opportunities by the hosting country is highly acknowledged. Learning the language, understanding system functions, the mutual interaction of refugees and the native residents, and participating in volunteer activities confirm the three main steps identified above by European Council on Refugees and Exiles.

As the first and foremost fundamental opportunity, the Norwegian introduction program as a basic tool offers a starting chance for refugees living in the local municipalities of the Trondheim region. After refugees' application was accepted and provided refugee status in Norway, the introduction program has an important role in the integration of refugees. Advisors who implement the content of the introduction program are well-informed and accompany refugees enrolled in the program to provide necessary advice helping them to accomplish their individual plans. However, some refugees criticized the potential of their advisors in feeding them the correct information during their enrollment in the introduction program and suggested that the municipalities can fill the gap by providing more training for the program advisors. For instance, one of the refugees said he had received various training during the program. Still, his program advisor had not been able to guide him accordingly on how to fulfill admission requirements to pursue higher education in Norway. He has often felt insulted by the content of the offered training being very primary, repetitive, or conflicting with his cultural beliefs.

Integration of refugees, for the interviewees, was understood as accepting Norway as the second homeland is crucial to establishing strong feelings of ownership and belonging in the local Norwegian communities. Participants mentioned all identified main domains by Ager and Strang (2008) during the interview. Among the ten indicators adopted from the conceptual framework, the health indicator from the markers and means domain was the only indicator not cited by refugees. While health issues as a significant indicator in the integration of refugees were mentioned constantly by the program advisors as one of the main challenges refugees' have in Norway due to their pre-migration and post-migration conditions.

As stated by different authors, the integration of refugees is a multidimensional and long-term process that requires the support of the hosting nations (ECRE 2002, Fyvie et al., 2003, Good Gingrich and Enns, 2019). Any achievements in the integration of refugees, such as learning the language, building social networks, employment, financial independence, understanding social codes, and how the system functions in the hosting country, are crucially important for asylum-granted refugees settled in the local municipalities (Phillimore, 2012). The appointed program advisors play an important role in helping refugees to accomplish their goals and effectively utilize the offered opportunities. The role of program advisors throughout the introduction program was also mentioned during the interviews, signifying that the introduction program provides the opportunity to learn the language and social studies, and understanding the basic rules and regulations substantially affects the integration of refugees. In addition,

refugees still face many challenges after the introduction program, such as not being able to learn the language, continue higher education, and not having secured jobs; for this to result, an individualized, tailored program is needed and designed for the program participants. People with higher education from their homeland are required to understand a good level of Norwegian language to pursue higher education or have their education accredited in Norway through supplementary courses, which will enable them and improve their chances in the labor market to practice their skills.

Overall, the introduction program, the role of housing, and establishing a sense of belonging in the Norwegian neighborhoods have a significant role in integrating refugees. The intro program facilitated a basic start for participants in Norway throughout learning the language, continuing higher education, entering the labor market, and maintaining financial independence. Furthermore, housing in the integration of refugees has an important and valuable position; for instance, participants reflected that owning a house gave them security, happiness, belonging, financial capability, and stability and created a social network for adults and children in the Norwegian neighborhood. Refugees perceived having a sense of belonging to their integration means accepting Norway as a second homeland. For instance, feeling at home, having a job, learning the language, establishing a network, being an active member of society, and participating in volunteer activities was crucial to the successful integration of refugees into the Norwegian society as they established a strong sense of belonging.

7.1.1 Markers and Means

Markers and means are fundamental domains with four identified indicators by Ager and Strang (2008): education, health, employment, and housing. This research acknowledges the mentioned indicators as significantly crucial for the integration of refugees in Norway. The integration efforts start with educating refugees learning the hosting country's language, social studies, financial independence through employment, owning a house by fulfilling mortgage criteria in Norway and living a healthy lifestyle.

7.1.1.1 Housing

Refugee settlement offices in local municipalities, which are responsible for housing provision, before the start of the introduction program for newly arrived refugees, expressed clearly by saying housing has an important role in the integration of refugees. In Norway, the welfare state guarantees the two basic needs for each individual (1 a shelter to live in and 2 food to eat).

Furthermore, the settlement office for refugees ensures that the location of houses is accessible to public transportation and amenities. As Philips (2006) and Murdie (2008) mentioned, providing suitable housing accelerates and facilitates an effective integration process of refugees. After being referred by IMDi to be settled in one of the local municipalities, all refugees are accommodated in an adequate house with an independent entrance, equipped with utensils and furnished. All the available means of housing models such as municipal housing, private and sublets are available for refugees to be settled, but municipal housing is prioritized for refugees.

There are some advantages and disadvantages to settling refugees in municipal or private housing. Factors that influence housing needs and the areas refugees want to be settled in are related to cultural background, municipal housing, cost efficiency, lack of self-sufficiency/dependence, and means of transport mobility influence their settlement. For instance, in the beginning, refugees want to live in municipal housing, relieved of certain burdens such as deposit guarantee, providing references, house maintenance, and demands with strict inspections. In contrast, the mentioned issues are opposite with private landlords towards the tenants. Refugees perceive most of the mentioned points as challenges and are individual agreements between the private landlord and the tenant. As recognized during the interviews' houses owned by municipalities are old compared to private houses, but refugees feel safe and ownership in municipal housing. Municipal houses are usually located close by access to public transportation and amenities, making the final decision for refugees to be settled in a house. The size of refugees' family are usually big, with more than two kids, and finding houses with many rooms has been a challenge in the local municipalities. In addition, there are many reasons why general skepticism, dependence, and lack of confidence exist among refugees after completing the introduction program. For example, some refugees could not learn the language, have a job, or pursue higher education in Norway. As stated previously, for refugees, everything starts with the introduction program. If the introduction program is accomplished, then any other plan and achievements will be easy, including buying a house.

The UN (2009) defines adequate housing as a fundamental right that one could live in 'security,' 'peace,' and 'dignity.' The right to adequate housing characteristics are explained mainly as having a status of freedom, entitlement, and broader conditions before forming a shelter. In addition, prejudices were also mentioned and perceived as a sign of discrimination against refugees' rights to access private houses. Some refugees had never received responses

to their messages when they were interested in renting or buying the available houses in the private market. This might lead refugees to believe that some Norwegians are racist, creating doubts among refugees towards the public people and affecting their well-being. My findings in the case study chapter revealed that making an appointment to visit the house before renting or attending to bid and offer in by buying a house from Norwegian owners is a very frequent occurrence that happens with refugees.

Private rental arrangements have affected the refugees' situation, and often they were asked by the owner to evacuate and had to move frequently to different houses. According to the participants, the condition for receiving a housing mortgage differs in each municipality. In some municipalities, easy and flexible solutions exist for refugees to buy their own houses offered through start loans. The participants' preferences of their desired house in living or owning a house were mainly defined as the ideal house. Some characteristics were listed as the desired house, such as staying longer during different stages of life, at least three bedrooms, a child-friendly neighborhood, a space for gardening, a nice outdoor view, and access to public transportation.

Overall, participants perceived the role of housing as essential in the integration of refugees. The role of housing was strongly associated with refugees' well-being, giving security, confidence, happiness, belonging, financial capability, stability, and creating a social network among the adults and the children of the family. Refugees and advisors believe that establishing stronger bonds with people of the local community and attending volunteer activities in the society can expedite the integration of refugees to enhance the sense of belonging in the Norwegian neighborhoods.

7.1.1.2 Education, health, and employment

Education, health, and employment indicators are strongly interconnected with the introduction program's objective. Regarding employment, education, and health, three participants suggested that the Norwegian government can find a solution to enhance refugees existing qualifications with possible supplementary courses, which is of utmost importance for the municipalities and the refugees. Added to this, Ager and Strang (2008) also stressed that non-recognition of educational documents and that refugees' qualifications acquired in their home country had been one of the most significant barriers to the integration of refugees. Another participant suggested combining work and Norwegian teaching from the beginning of the

introduction program can help refugees learn the language and build a career background in Norway.

Regarding refugees' education and knowledge on health, factors such as digital exclusion and adult refugees' age were also acknowledged by refugees and their program advisors. Mainly advisors stressed a lot about digitally excluded refugees in Norwegian society, requiring them to spend more time teaching them basic digital knowledge. Improving their capacity will be an added value to expediting the integration of refugees as active citizens in Norway. When refugees are educated in using technological tools, it can set out one of the main components of being active citizens that could shape and help them be effective in society (Bergh, 2009). This is an evidence-based shortcoming noticed during the research that the effort will contribute to the empowerment of refugees and accelerate the process of integration into Norwegian society. Since the pandemic, using digital tools has increased a lot, such as working from home, online classes, and access to some public services online without filling out forms or waiting in the queue at public offices.

Program advisors acknowledged that adult refugees are often vulnerable due to age or many other reasons. Learning something new challenges the way they have thought and done things before. Many refugees have had major stress loads and went through difficult times during their transition to reach their final destination and in the settlement process. They have had bad incidents, challenging life situations, violence, mistreatment, torture, etc. In such cases, it is difficult to keep up and learn new knowledge while the brain is overloaded with many different thoughts and the body is locked in a survival/defense mode. It is hard to imagine leaving everything behind and running away, making wishful dreams, and living in a new country where one is required to start all over (NDHEC, 2014).

As previously mentioned in the case study chapter, health was the only indicator refugees did not directly cite during the interviews because sharing details about individuals' physical, mental and psychological states is an intensely private matter. However, program advisors often mentioned refugees' health problems during the interviews. In the weekly intro courses, health professionals attended the sessions and provided needed guidance for the refugees. Facilitation of work opportunities first through attending internships during the intro program and finding work through social networks refugees have built was recognized. Above all, the refugees

highly emphasized the role of program advisors in utilizing intro program resources and opportunities for planning and identifying an effective individual package for refugees.

7.1.2 Facilitators

The interviewed participants acknowledged that knowing the Norwegian language, culture, and how the system functions in Norway; are perceived as vital for the integration of refugees. Language, cultural knowledge, safety, and stability indicators are identified as key areas recognized necessary for the effective integration of refugees into the Norwegian neighborhoods. The facilitators' domain mainly covers part of the two main topics of this research, such as the Norwegian introduction program and the sense of belonging of refugees within their locality in Norwegian neighborhoods. Safety and stability were also crucial aspects for the participants, such as refugees owning a house, financial independence, being active taxpayers, and understanding their rights and duties. Following the findings of Ager and Strang (2008), speaking the Norwegian language is accepted as central to the integration process of refugees, and the Norwegian introduction program provides refugees with language courses and cultural knowledge. According to the participants, the Norwegian language is difficult, and not being able to speak the language is one of the main obstacles to the integration of refugees in many aspects. For example, accomplishing the mentioned issue increases refugees' chances in the labor market and allows them to continue higher education, communicate effectively, and engage in active social participation in society. Since language is one of the main components of the Norwegian introduction program, the quality of the services and the teacher's skills in the adult learning centers were criticized by the interviewed refugees saying that the personnel in the language schools lack a pedagogy background.

Safety and stability were strongly associated with refugees' sense of belonging in the Norwegian neighborhoods. Yuval-Davis (2006 and 2007) states that belonging is an emotional bond, feeling 'at home' and 'safe.' Sense of belonging is perceived as being acknowledged by others in the host society where a person is an active member in the community and has rights and duties. In accordance with the findings of Ager and Strang (2008), refugees believe that belonging in the Norwegian neighborhood is about being accepted, recognized, and having a sense of respect for the culture and shared values of individuals, indicating that refugees live in an integrated community. Regarding safety, participants felt discrimination in the labor market, but not usually in the areas where the refugees live among Norwegian communities. Refugees are spread all over the local municipalities in the Trondheim region. According to the program

advisors, local municipalities try to provide a dispersed settlement of refugees in the neighborhoods all over the area. This idea is perceived as the integration of refugees in various locations. However, some refugees who recognized Norwegians as introverts criticized the settlement of refugees all over the municipalities. Refugees believe the dispersed settlement could lead to integration but is it integration or isolation when you are distanced from the only connection you have with the people you know.

The available housing models such as municipal housing and private in the open market and sublets accommodations are available for refugees. Regarding stability, mainly municipal housing is prioritized for refugees based on their eligibility, especially refugees with children. The settlement of refugees in the municipal housing is planned to encourage them to move out from municipal housing as soon as they can manage themselves better than other refugees who wish to continue living in the municipal housing. In accordance with the findings of Ager and Strang (2008), refugees often indicated that they feel physically safe in the area where they live.

Program advisors, adult learning centers, and volunteer organizations were described as cultural mediators. They provide various activities and training for refugees and help them understand how the system functions in Norway. Local municipalities buy services such as language courses, capacity-building training, and many other activities from bigger cities or municipalities with more populations. In this sense, events such as arrangements for celebrating special occasions, short trips, hiking, food festivals, and doing things common among Norwegians help refugees learn the language and culture in Norway.

In addition, building networks, having contact with Norwegians, and attending various activities offered by libraries and volunteer organizations are essential for learning both language and cultural knowledge.

7.1.3 Social Connection

Refugees acknowledge social bridges as having connections with different groups and people within their locality through participation in volunteer activities (dugnad) arranged by the community. In addition, interviewees believe that engaging in social activities and maintaining a continuous relationship with the hosting communities will help refugees make Norwegian friends. As stated by Ager and Strang (2008), living close to relatives enables refugees to maintain strong social bonds and helps them to practice their cultural values. Regarding cultural

background, refugees tend to live in a collective group, which means a lot to them and makes it easy for them to visit, interact and help each other. Social bonds also enable the maintenance of cultural practices between Norwegians and refugees. One of the interviewed advisors mentioned that there are not enough arenas for cultural practices and suggested that if there are enough social meeting places, that could facilitate the opportunity for refugees and the Norwegians to meet each other and become friends. Overall such connections among like-ethnic groups of refugees and the Norwegians play an essential role in feeling at home and secure and promoting their sense of belonging.

As Ager and Strang (2008); Grzymala-Kazłowska, and Phillimore (2018) mentioned, refugees, face two main barriers: a lack of familiarity with system functions and not knowing the language of the hosting country are often acknowledged as main obstacles. Therefore connecting refugees with services and efforts that help them develop their potential will facilitates the integration process effectively. Regarding social links, refugees recognized the role of program advisors and language schools significant. However, the participants mentioned some existing gaps among the mentioned groups that could be improved by providing capacity-building training or ensuring that people are assigned based on their professional background. Program advisors and the refugee settlement offices support refugees in accessing, helping them understand different services and structures of the government system in local municipalities. For instance, upon arrival, they teach them how to live in Norway, complete health checkups, get their refugee status documents, open a bank account, start language school, find daycare for their children, and many other services offered in the municipality or surrounding cities. These mentioned supports and services happen immediately when a refugee is settled in the municipality and are often recognized as a demanding start for refugees.

7.1.4 Foundation

Rights and citizenship discussion has mainly encompassed the fulfillment of certain criteria by refugees in Norway and has been significant for the integration of refugees. For instance, refugees living in the local municipalities are entitled to a Norwegian social security number (personal number), making them eligible to benefit from the welfare state advantages. After their refugee status is approved, they are settled in one of the local municipalities and entitled to join a paid integration program. Refugees are entitled to a shelter, residence permit, travel document, family doctor, daycare spot and school for their children, and any other benefits offered by the welfare state. If they have lived for more than three years in a municipality, they

can participate in the county and municipal elections to vote. In the beginning, all refugees receive a temporary residence permit. Later, they can apply for a permanent residence permit if they have income, have not received financial social assistance, and provide a language and social studies certificate (UDI, 2022). As noted by one of the participants, refugees will be sorry when their application is denied permanent residence permit and citizenship status. Recognized during the interviews that many will have problems at work if they have not worked hard to improve their language skills in classes offered during the introduction program. Later, attending paid courses after the intro program is too expensive. Therefore, the foundation domain is very important for the integration of refugees since it maintains the rights and duties of refugees and insists on being responsible for accomplishing them.

7.2 Implications

The central discussion of this research is about asylum-granted refugees' integration in the local municipalities of the Trondheim region. This study enabled me to look at various aspects of refugees' integration, including the impacts of the Norwegian introduction program on refugees' integration according to program advisors and refugees enrolled in the introduction program. Furthermore, in this research, I explored the integration and sense of belonging of refugees in the Norwegian society, and how refugees and practitioners perceive the role of housing for the integration of refugees was studied as well.

Overall, the Norwegian integration policy has foreseen many good opportunities for refugees to integrate into Norwegian society. Mainly through the introduction program as a primary tool that provides refugees education to learn the language and build their education and career goals. Furthermore, the program helps refugees develop their competencies to secure employment opportunities, sustain their financial independence, and learn social codes and how the system functions in Norway. Employment, the role of owning a house, and having a sense of belonging provide refugees safety, stability, feeling at home, and having the sense of being part of the society in Norwegian neighborhoods which affects their well-being and eases the process of integration. The potential of combining work and Norwegian teaching for refugees, tailoring individualized plans, living by one's own values, building networks, acculturation, assimilation, and providing work opportunities was recognized by participants but needed further exploration.

Program advisors implementing the introduction program play an important role in helping refugees utilize the opportunity during the introduction program and expedite the integration process for asylum-granted refugees. In this sense, program advisors can accompany refugees with their targeted plans and support them effectively in many ways using the one-time offered program. Refugees were sure about the relationship between integration and the introduction program, the role of owning a house for their integration within a local neighborhood, and establishing a sense of belonging. In addition, refugees noticed many practices, potentials, and experiences that enabled good results over time and perceived the possibilities to continue improving them.

From this perspective, the introduction program and its associated support can become a starting point for the integration of refugees. However, to achieve expected results, professionals must discuss the role of the introduction program, and it is fundamental to include the refugees who have been through the process in these discussions. The lack of job opportunities and not learning the language during the introduction program poses many challenges for refugees in Norway, especially in the Trondheim region. Although asylum-granted refugees settled in the local municipalities during the introduction program receive much support, once the duration of the designed program and their individual plan is completed, they most likely find many obstacles.

Therefore, it is essential to conduct start-up sessions, mid-term evaluations, and follow-up studies to investigate their conditions during and after the introductory program to develop and implement suitable support measures. The need to create individualized programs during the introduction program to help refugees plan education and career goals was also observed. Furthermore, there is a need to evaluate and improve the capacity of both program advisors and the quality of services provided by the adult learning centers, especially when refugees do not learn the language and have jobs after the completion of the introduction program.

Although the Norwegian introduction program aims to be a promising start-up tool for refugees to learn the language, this research suggests that adult learning centers are still incapable of providing sufficient language courses for refugees. The study suggests that just like schools and universities, adult learning centers should be able to offer more academic literature and language certificates to certain groups of refugees. This will enable refugees to learn the language systematically at an advanced level and document proof of language certificate.

The local municipalities are offering an introductory program to all adult refugees three months after their settlement to make sure refugees learn the language, find a job, and be economically independent. One participant noted that one aspect that would improve refugees' conditions would be combining work and Norwegian teaching for refugees with less than a college education. So they could start working from the start of the introduction program and be supported by Norwegian teaching at their workplace.

Overall, this research shows that the Norwegian introduction program provides different capacity-building solutions and many opportunities for the integration of refugees in Norway. The research also identified potentialities and challenges that can be addressed to continue improving the quality of the introduction program to be implemented in the local municipalities. Integration is a long-term process with many interrelated aspects that need to be taken care of, especially for the asylum-granted refugees with families. It involves different stages and actors. This thesis has explicitly focused on the integration of refugees during their enrollment in the introduction program. Still, improvements are needed in other areas and stages of the process and coordination among the different authorities involved.

Housing and the sense of belonging of refugees for their integration are two main topics in this research. As perceived in the case study chapter, housing and sense of belonging articulate social identities for refugees. Participants recognized belonging as being accepted and welcomed by the local residents with mutual interaction between refugees and the Norwegians. Accepting Norway as a second homeland, learning the language, feeling at home, actively participating in activities arranged for refugees in their locality, and establishing networks are vital signs of belonging. Along the process, using the introduction program as a one-time offered opportunity will qualify refugees to achieve valuable results in the future, such as possessing their own houses. Housing is strongly associated with refugees' well-being, and housing provides refugees stability, safety, economic support, and a sense of belonging in the Norwegian neighborhoods. Refugees' commitment to buying their own houses is recognized as a well-deserved future investment in Norway. Housing has a crucial role in the integration of refugees, and local municipalities can work to secure loans for refugees to buy their own houses through the state 'house banking.'

8. CONCLUSION

This master thesis, as indicated in chapter one, was conducted to understand the significance of existing integration programs in Norway for refugees. As elaborated under the problem statement, the central theme of this research was to explore the importance of the Norwegian introduction program, the role of housing, and the sense of belonging of refugees to become part of an effective members of the Norwegian society and overall the integration of refugees into local Norwegian municipalities. The Norwegian introduction program as a capacitating tool offers many opportunities for newly arrived refugees in the local municipalities to start their first experience in Norway after being given refugee status. Refugees acknowledged the role of housing for their integration and establishing a sense of belonging through meaningful interactions with an open spirit mutually in the environment they live in during the integration process. Housing and belonging are perceived as time taking processes, and the role of the introduction program is recognized as significant to ease and expedite achieving the mentioned processes effectively if the resources are utilized well. As indicated in the introduction chapter, by refugees, I mean those refugees that participate in the Introduction Program. As indicated in chapter four, this qualitative research uses a case study module.

The overall outcome of the whole research question about the introduction program, the role of housing, and belonging to the integration of refugees encompasses some satisfactions and dissatisfaction of refugees settled in the local municipalities. First, the introduction program should be designed based on each refugee's reality (individualized, tailored program) since they are a diverse group with complicated backgrounds. Housing plays an essential role for refugees to have hope for their future while living in Norwegian neighborhoods. The facilitation of flexible housing mortgages helps refugees own a house. Having a house meant a lot for refugees, and for them to achieve the goal of owning a house, the local municipalities' house banking rules can consider refugees' conditions while providing start loans. Housing and sense of belonging were strongly associated with refugees' confidence, well-being, feeling at home, safe, and belonging in the Norwegian neighborhoods.

As academic research, the thesis uses a well-established literature review. In addition to reviewing the related scholarly literature and using the author's personal experience and observation, the thesis uses empirical data from fifteen in-depth and semi-structured interviews, i.e., four with program advisors, ten with refugees, and one last interview with a local resident

to know his perspectives on refugees living in their neighborhood. All 15 interviews were manually transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis and the technique of coding. Barriers and opportunities are compared with the conceptual framework adopted by Ager and strang (2008) related to the integration of refugees in the local municipalities of the Trondheim region. As a result, under the four main domains and ten indicators identified in the framework mentioned above (see chapters three and six), each part was broken down into respective indicators to cover various aspects of the integration of refugees into the Norwegian society. The overall objective of the thesis was to answer the research questions indicated above.

Recommendations for Future Research:

Although the need to further research is unlimited in academia, my thesis highlights a few gaps that would require further research. Therefore, I would recommend future researchers, particularly student researchers like me, consider the following questions when planning to conduct research projects on refugees' integration in Norway.

- How can the Norwegian side be better sensitized about the refugees' backgrounds and needs?
- How can the government take measures to prevent possible discrimination against refugees in the labor market
- How do we build the resilience of refugees to turn them get used to Norwegian society?
- How can we as a society help refugees use their existing qualifications in a more effective way?
- How can the Norwegian government facilitate the recognition of foreign qualifications by providing supplementary education based on the local context for refugees?
- How can the digital gaps of refugees be better addressed?

Given the size and scope of my thesis project, I was able to produce some academic knowledge in the field of integration of refugees into Norwegian society. As a student researcher, I understand that my thesis builds upon the existing literature and the work of senior researchers who have provided the theoretical foundation for us to proceed. In the light of reviewed literature in (chapters one, two, and five) and my empirical findings from the in-depth semi-structured interviews, I was able to produce knowledge with the potential to fill some gaps. For instance, the hosting country's education, housing mortgage, designing an individualized program for people with higher education, combining introduction programs with work,

provision of academic Norwegian language literature in the adult learning centers, and linking refugees with natives are positively related to the chances of establishing a sense of belonging and the integration of refugees effectively.

Policy Recommendations:

As a student researcher who has reviewed the literature and collected data through face-to-face interviews with refugee participants, program advisors, and being a refugee myself, I came up with the following policy recommendations to make the integration process for newcomer refugees more effective and efficient. De Vroome and Van Tubergen (2010) acknowledged that refugees have potential resources from which both refugees themselves and the society at large in the hosting country can benefit more when their qualifications are recognized.

- Implementing an individualized program for refugees
- Improving the quality of the language courses offered by the adult learning centers
- Tailoring an independently designed program for refugees, especially ones with a university background
- Like the schools and universities, the adult learning centers should provide language courses focused on Norwegian literature and award graduation certificates.
- The Norwegian government can strategize facilitating and recognizing refugees' education and qualification by providing supplementary, practical, and accelerated short-term courses based on the local context.

Challenges and Limitations:

This thesis project has also had its challenges and limitations like any other research project. One of the primary limitations was the limited timeframe for my project due to a late start. Additionally, the language barrier I faced was quite challenging because neither refugee participants nor I spoke fluent Norwegian. But I chose to solve the issue using English as the main language in this thesis. Given the refugee crisis in Ukraine, it was challenging and time-consuming to make appointments with the respective officials in the municipalities. Therefore, interviews were not conducted as planned, especially with the program advisors working in the local municipalities.

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